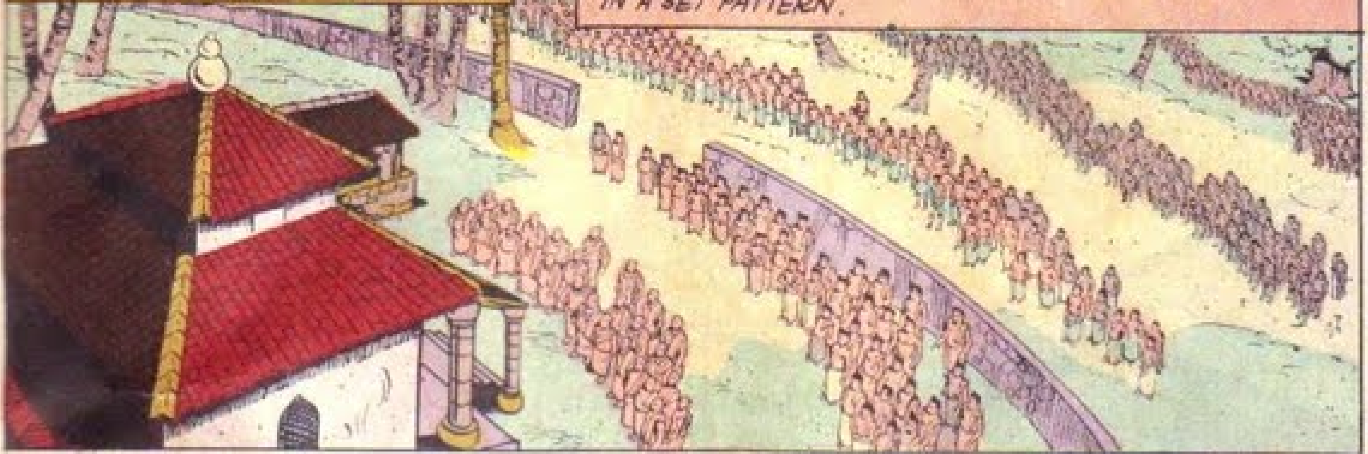
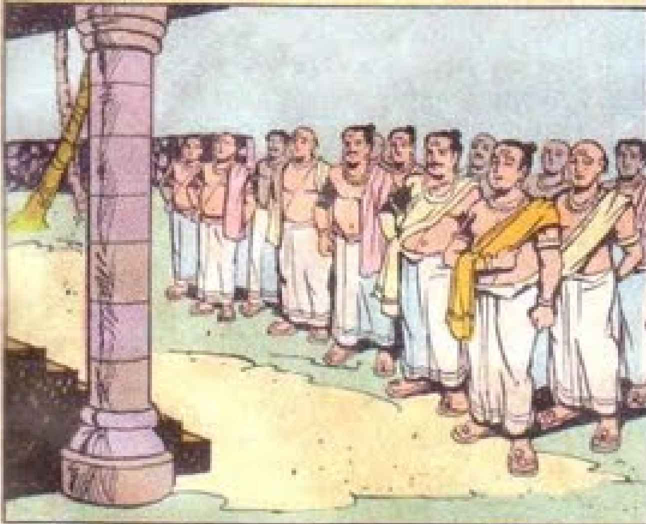
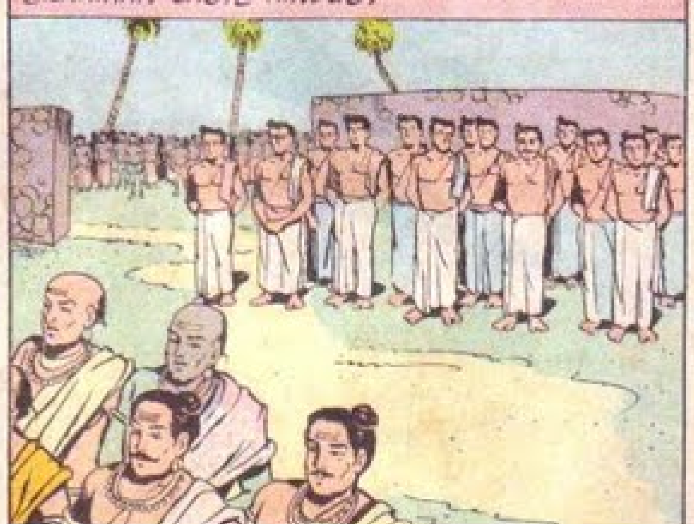


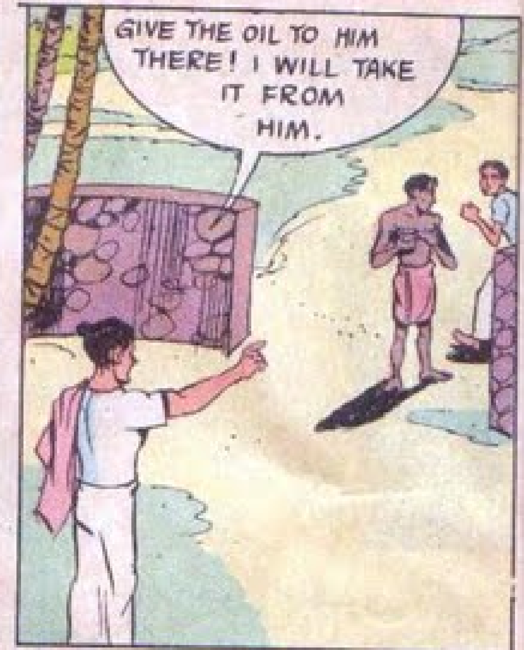




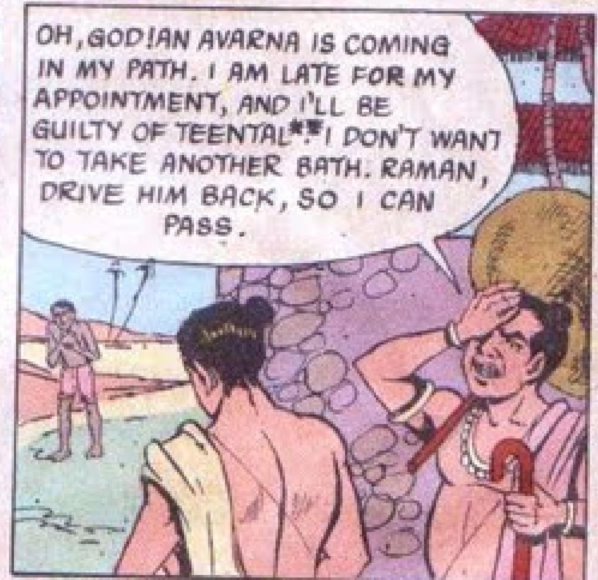


* LITERALLY "WITHOUT CASTE" AS OPPOSED TO CASTE HINDUS OR "SAVARNAS" WHO ARE DIVIDED INTO FOUR CASTES.







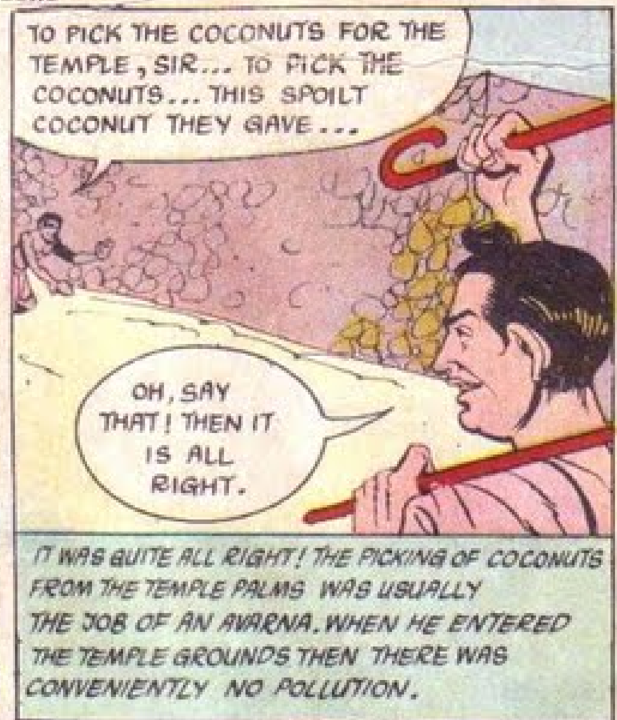




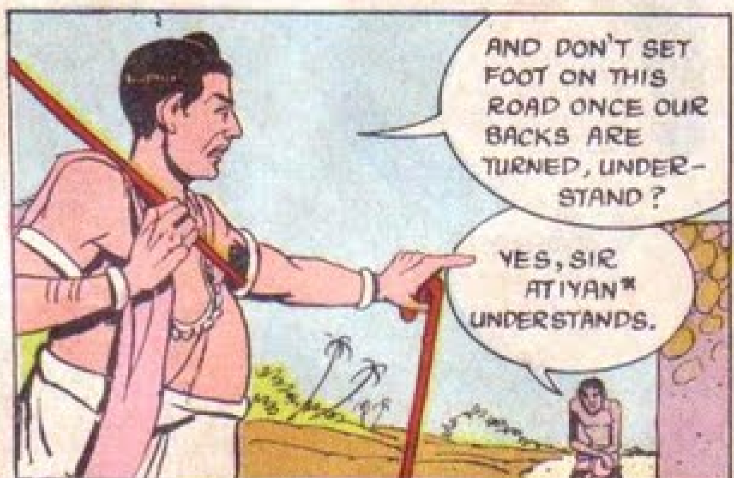


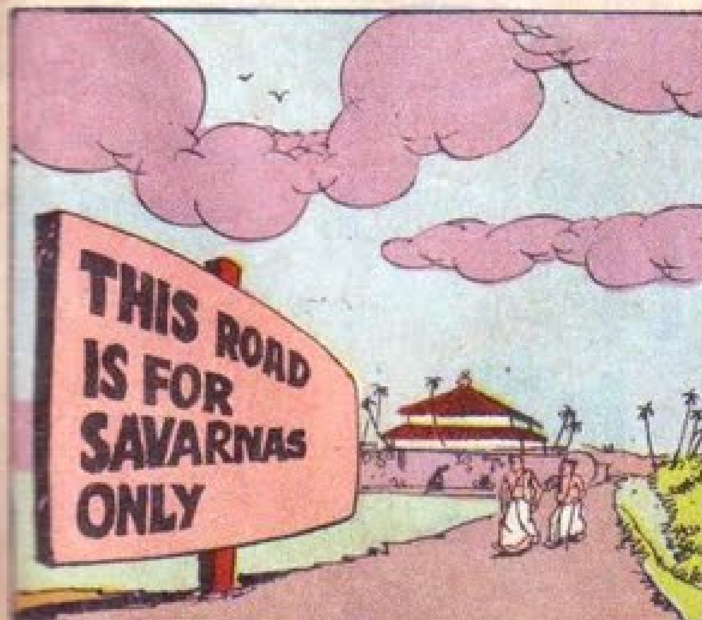
* TOUCH BY AN AVARNA. ** CLOSE APPROACH BY AN AVARNA.





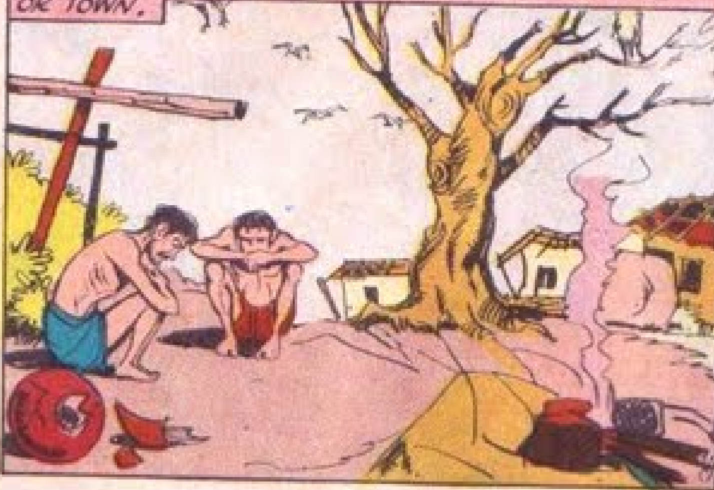








* "SLAVE" THE LOWEST OF THE AVARNAS COULD NOT USE THE FIRST PERSON SINGULAR 'JNAN' ('I') ** POLLUTION

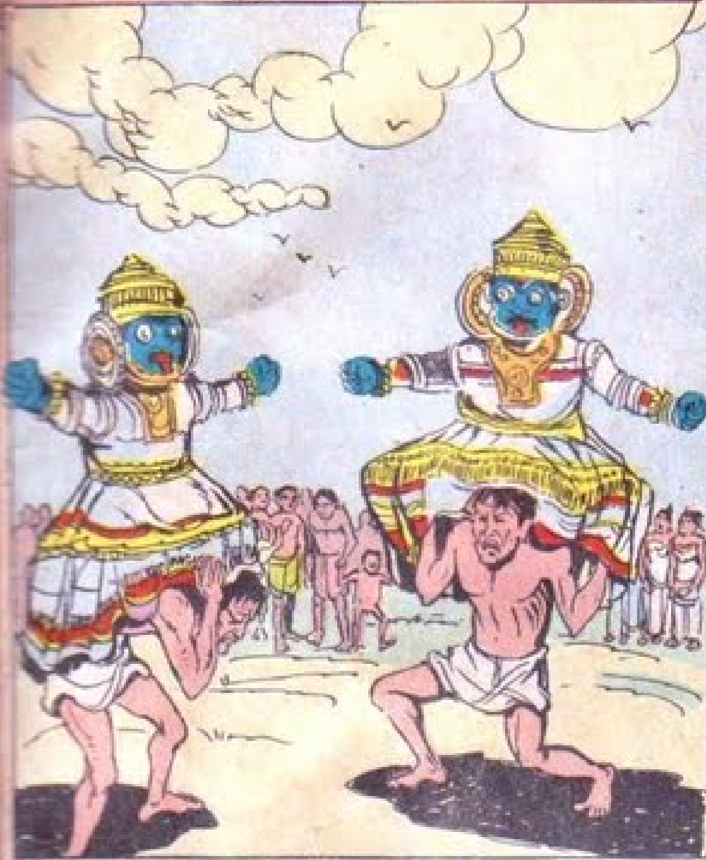

THUS, OSTRACIZED ALMOST EVERYWHERE, THE "AVARNAS" LIVED IN ISOLATION ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE OR TOWN.


THE BARBARITY OF IT ALL HAD FILLED SWAMI VIVEKANANDA WITH LOATHING, WHEN HE HAD HEARD ABOUT IT.
THIS IS THE MADNESS OF A LUNATIC ASYLUM.

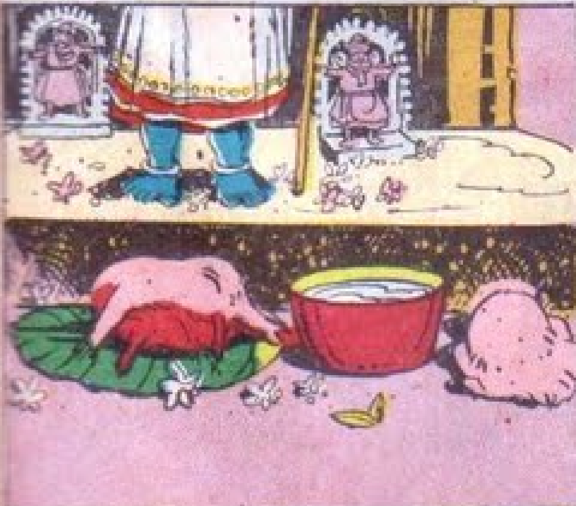

THOSE CONSIDERED LOWEST AMONG THE "AVARNAS" (THE ADIVASIS) HAD TO LIVE IN THE FOREST.

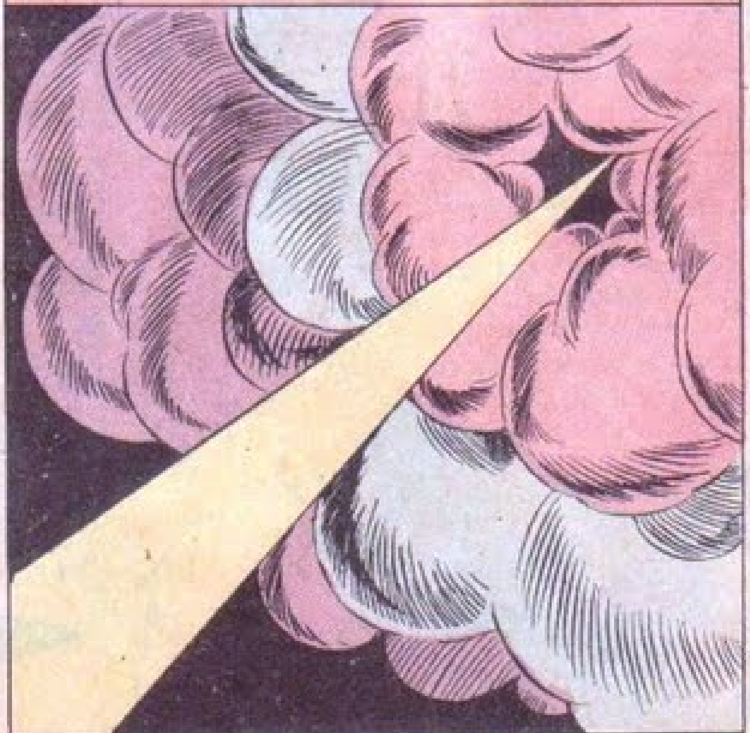

THEY WERE CONSIDERED DEFILING AND THEY LED DEFILED LIVES.


THEY WERE CONSIDERED FILTH, AND THEY LET FILTH COLLECT ROUND THEM.


TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT BY THE CASTE HINDUS, IT WAS NATURAL FOR THE AVARNAS TO WORSHIP DEITIES THAT HAD CRUEL OR FIERCE ASPECTS- MARUTHA, SHASTA, ARUKOLA ...


... BHADRAKALI AND CHAMUNDI.


THEY LIVED WRETCHED LIVES AND WERE DENIED EVEN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION. THEIR OFFERINGS TO THEIR GODS AND GODDESSES WERE TODDY, ARRACK AND MEAT.
WOULD THESE MEN WHO LIVED IN THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE AND INJUSTICE, EVER KNOW FREEDOM AND JUSTICE?

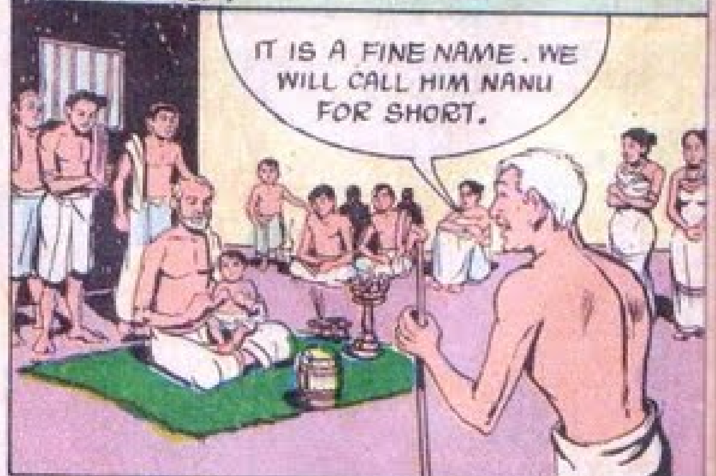

IN ALL THIS DARKNESS THERE APPEARED A NEW LIGHT.



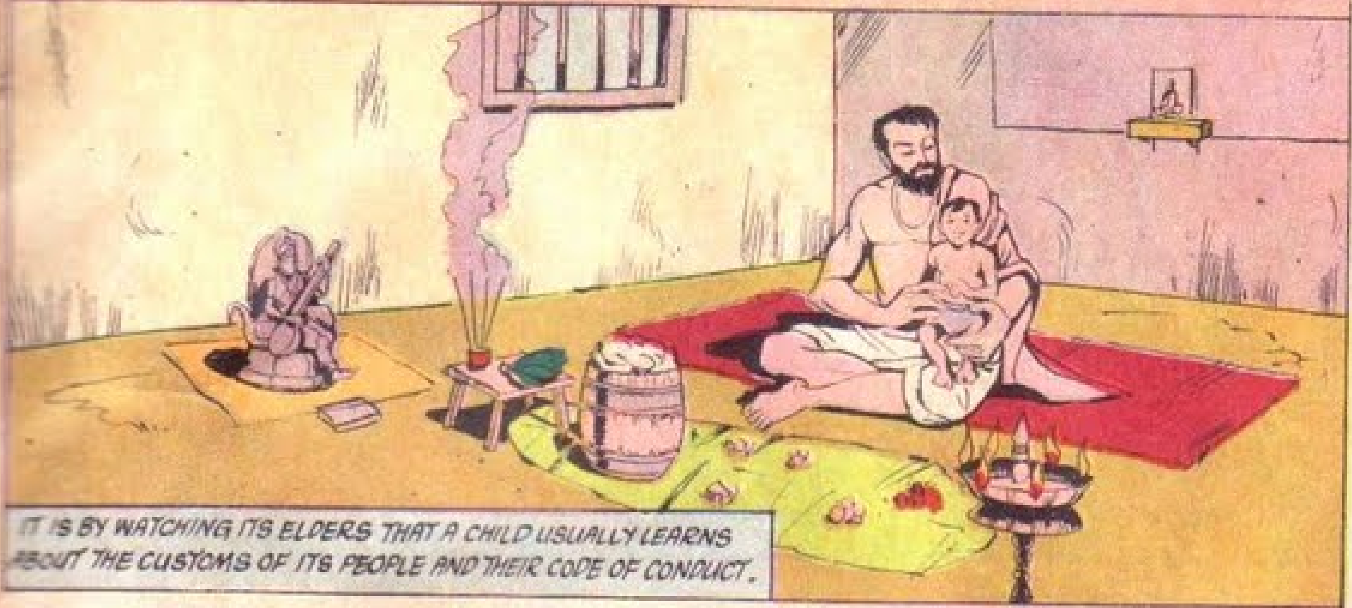




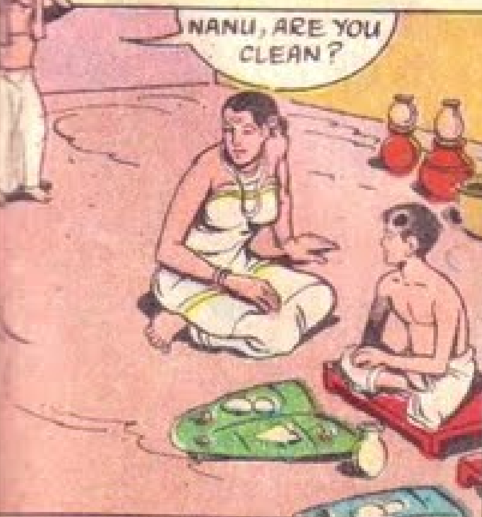




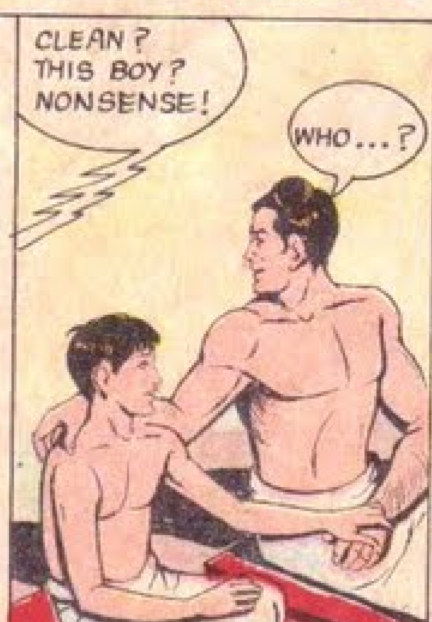
* ACHARYA, TEACHER OR MASTER, PRONOUNCED "AASHAAN". ** CHILD



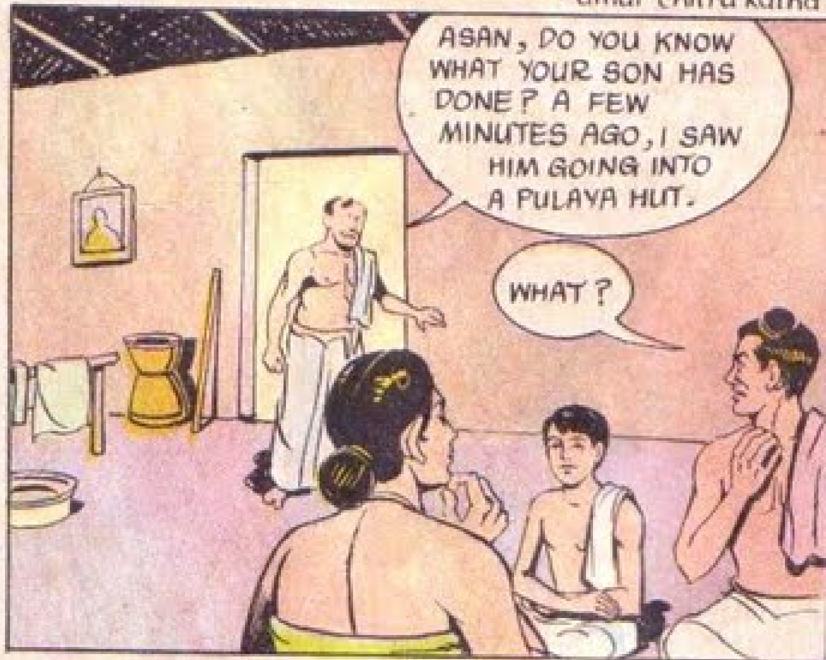








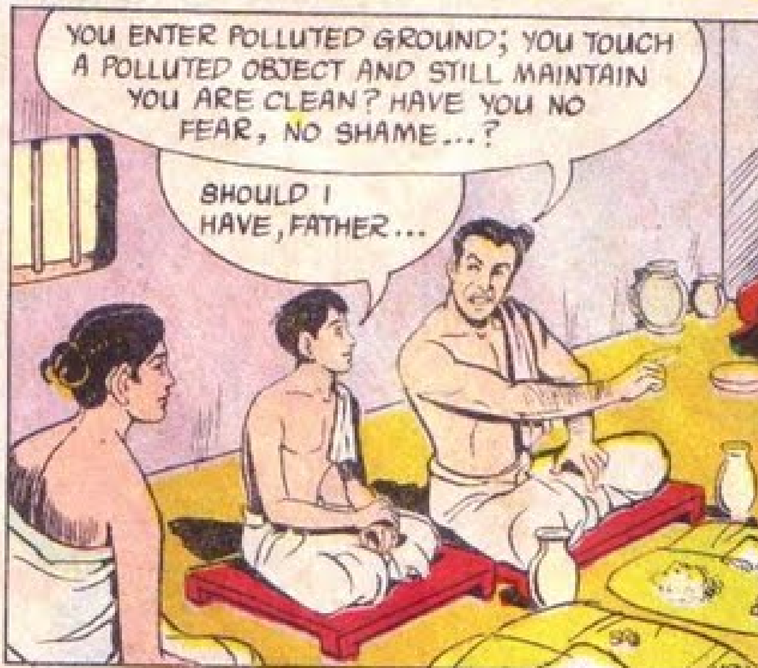
* PULAYAS ARE AMONG THE LOWLIEST OF AVARNAS.

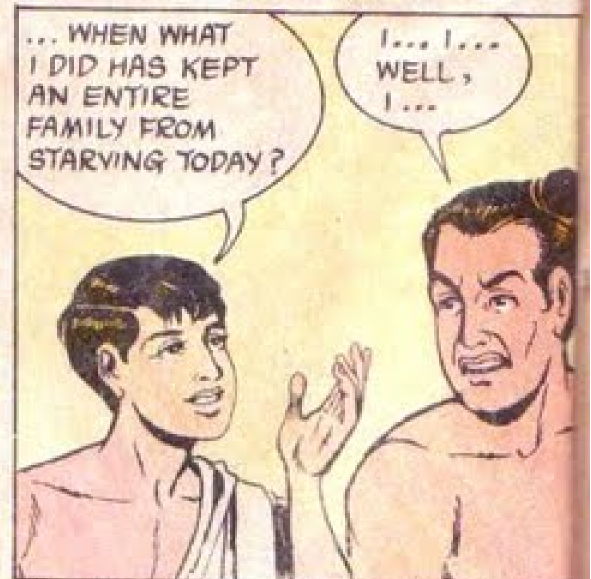

ASAN, DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR SON HAS DONE? A FEW MINUTES AGO, I SAW HIM GOING INTO A PULAYA HUT.
WHAT?

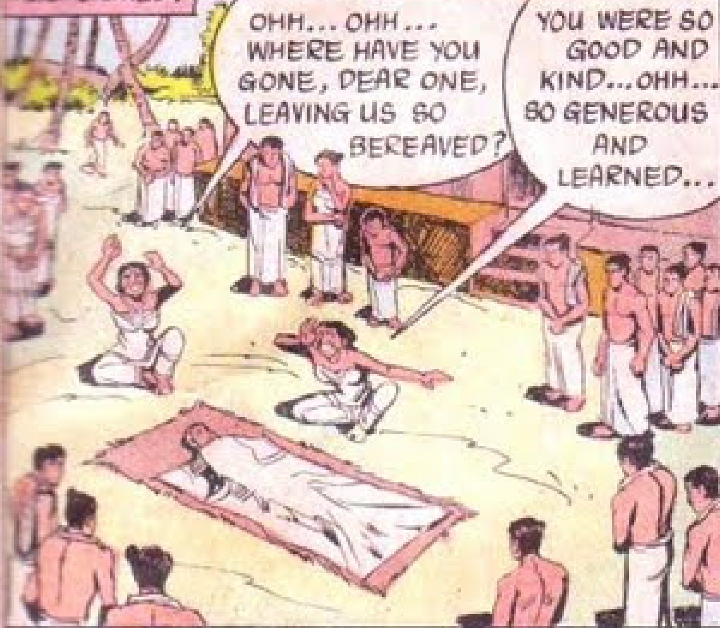

NANU! IS IT TRUE?
IT IS, FATHER.

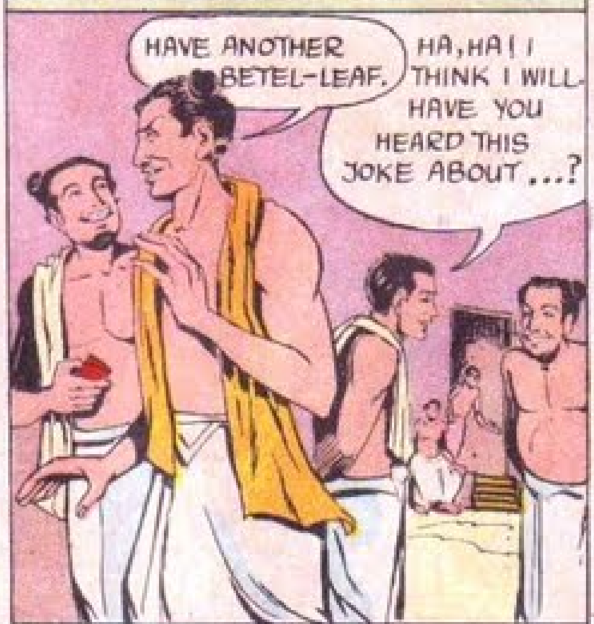

"THERE WAS A POT OF RICE BOILING OVER INSIDE, AND THERE WAS NO ONE IN THE HOUSE TO WATCH IT."


"SO I WENT IN AND TOOK IT OFF THE FIRE."


YOU ENTER POLLUTED GROUND; YOU TOUCH A POLLUTED OBJECT AND STILL MAINTAIN YOU ARE CLEAN? HAVE YOU NO FEAR, NO SHAME...?
SHOULD I HAVE, FATHER...


... WHEN WHAT I DID HAS KEPT AN ENTIRE FAMILY FROM STARVING TODAY?
I... I... WELL, I...
A YOUNG CHILD HAD EXPOSED THE INHUMANITY OF A CUSTOM.









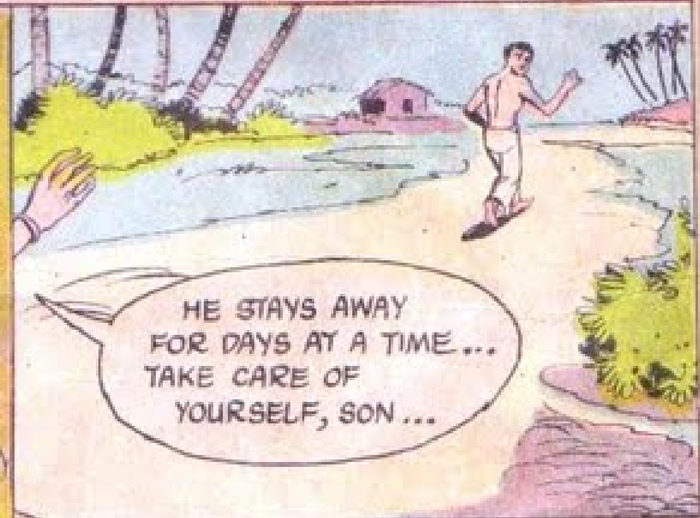


* THIS IS A CEREMONY WHERE FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS COME TO MOURN THE DEAD PERSON.


SOON AFTER, NARAYANA PURSUED HIS STUDIES UNDER HIS MATERNAL UNCLE, KRISHNAN VAIDYAR. VAIDYAR HAD MANY RARE BOOKS ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS. NARAYANA MASTERED THEM ALL.


BUT HIS HAND WENT MOST OFTEN TOWARDS BOOKS ON ONE PARTICULAR SUBJECT...
...A SUBJECT THAT REVEALS THE ONENESS OF ALL CREATION. IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF A LIFELONG QUEST.


AS HE GREW OLDER, NARAYANA SHOWED SIGNS OF BECOMING A WANDERER, TIRELESSLY WALKING LONG DISTANCES.
THERE GOES YOUR SON AGAIN, KUTTI AMMA.

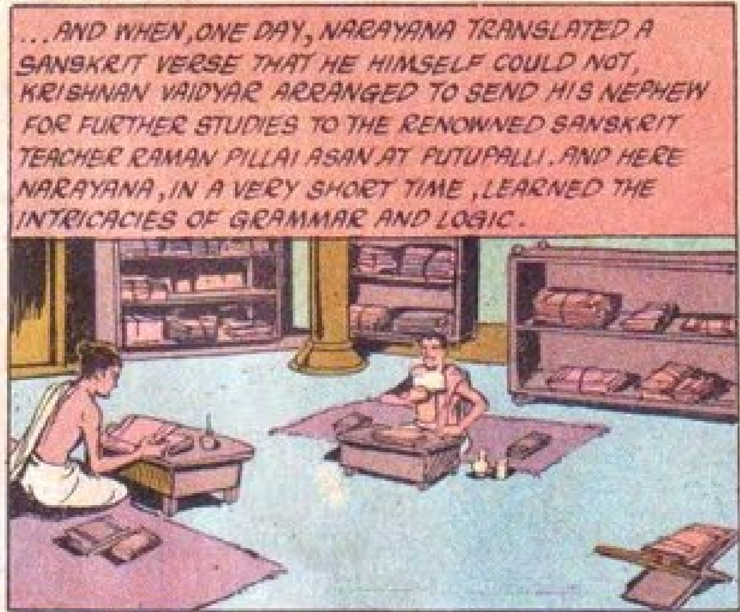

HE STAYS AWAY FOR DAYS AT A TIME... TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, SON...

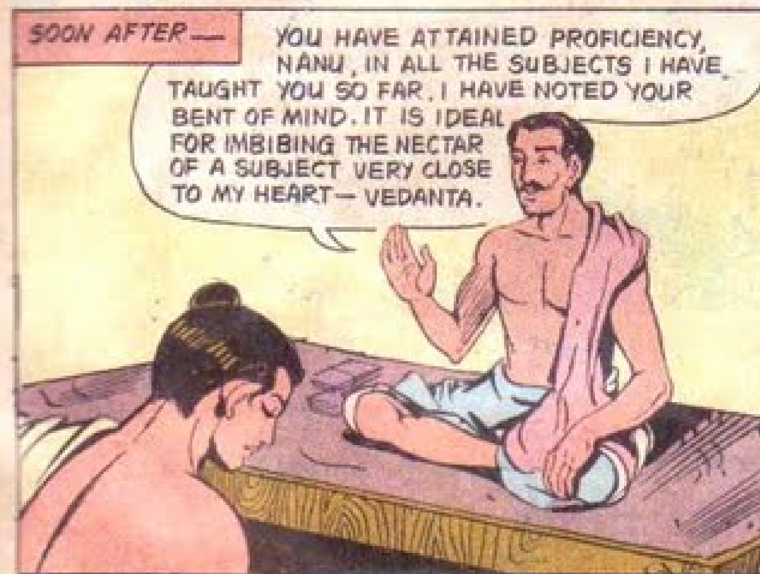

ON ONE SUCH OCCASION AWAY FROM HOME, NARAYANA WAS PRAYING AT AN OLD DESERTED TEMPLE, WHEN HIS HEAD BEGAN TO ACHE SEVERELY.
I WONDER — IS THIS THE SYMPTOM OF...? YES, I AM GOING IN FOR AN ATTACK OF SMALLPOX. WHY WORRY THE FAMILY? I WON'T GO HOME.


AND FOR THE NEXT EIGHTEEN DAYS—
ADORATION TO YOU, O MOTHER!

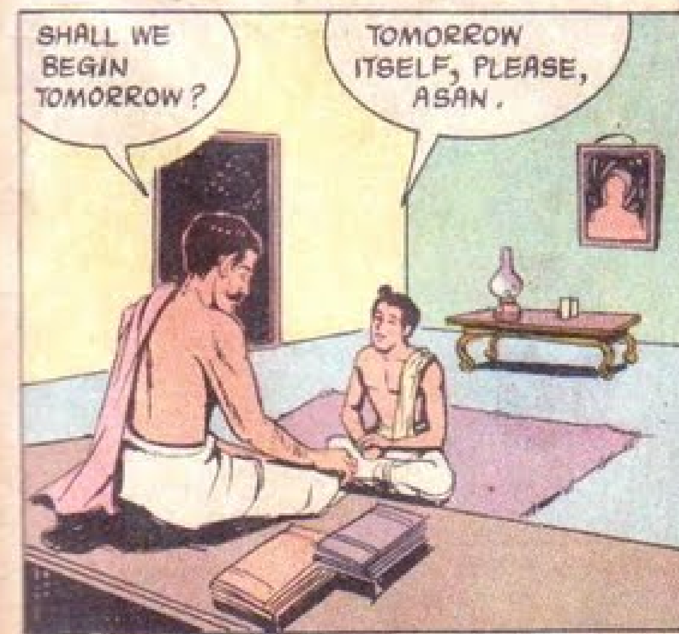

ON THE NINETEENTH DAY, NARAYANA HAD A BATH AND RETURNED HOME.
WHY, NANU... THESE SPOTS ON YOUR FACE... ARE MARKS LEFT BY SMALLPOX. WHY DIDN'T YOU COME HOME, THE MOMENT YOU KNEW...
I STAYED AT A TEMPLE, UNCLE, TILL I WAS CURED.


BUT WHO CURED YOU ?
THE GODDESS.
VAIDYAR WAS DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH NARAYANA'S FAITH AND DEVOTION ...


... AND WHEN, ONE DAY, NARAYANA TRANSLATED A SANSKRIT VERSE THAT HE HIMSELF COULD NOT, KRISHNAN VAIDYAR ARRANGED TO SEND HIS NEPHEW FOR FURTHER STUDIES TO THE RENOWNED SANSKRIT TEACHER RAMAN PILLAI ASAN AT PUTUPALLI. AND HERE NARAYANA, IN A VERY SHORT TIME, LEARNED THE INTRICACIES OF GRAMMAR AND LOGIC.

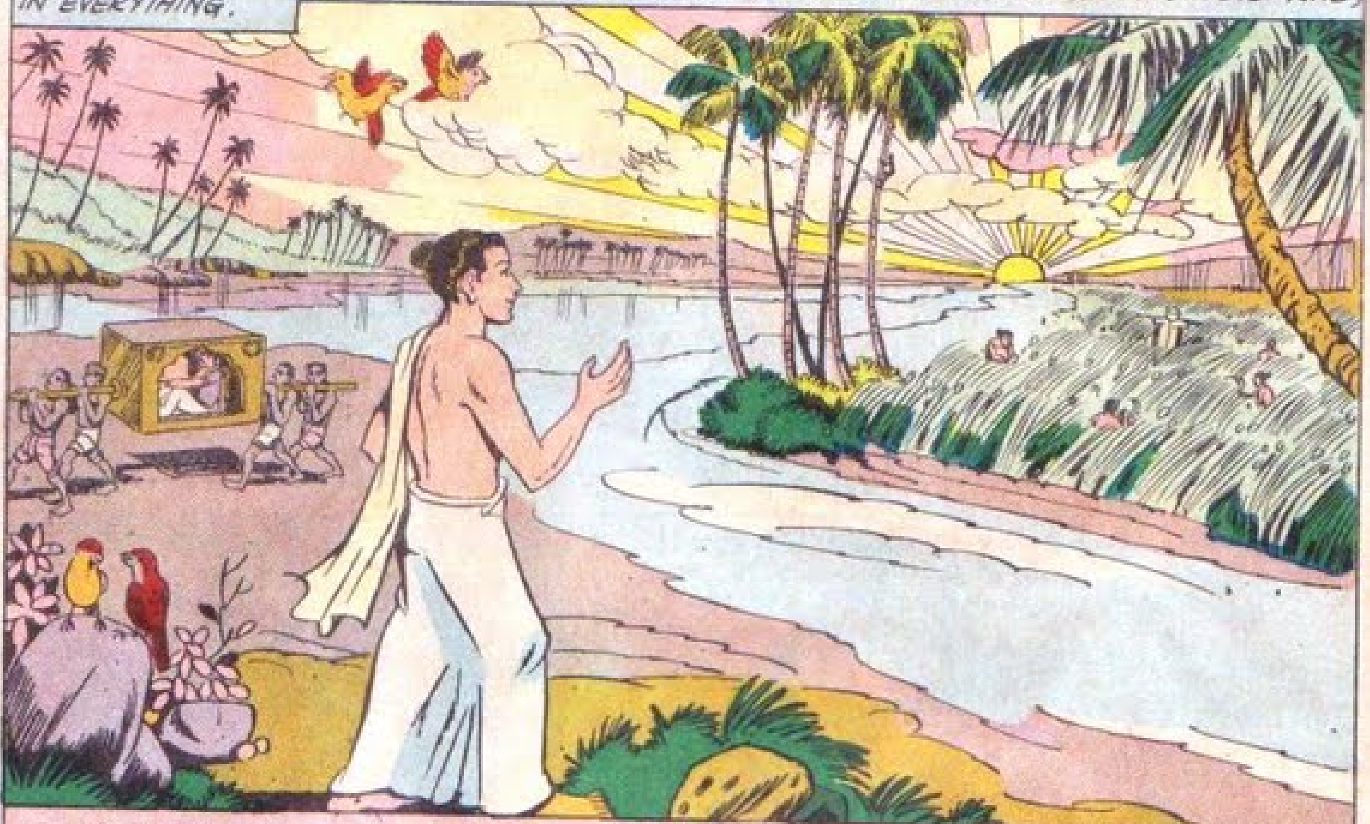

SOON AFTER —
YOU HAVE ATTAINED PROFICIENCY, NANU, IN ALL THE SUBJECTS I HAVE TAUGHT YOU SO FAR. I HAVE NOTED YOUR BENT OF MIND. IT IS IDEAL FOR IMBIBING THE NECTAR OF A SUBJECT VERY CLOSE TO MY HEART— VEDANTA.


VEDANTA ?


SHALL WE BEGIN TOMORROW ?
TOMORROW ITSELF, PLEASE, ASAN.


AND VEDANTA SPREAD ITS LIGHT OVER THE MIND OF NARAYANA.

AND IN THE GLORY OF EVERY SUNRISE AT PUTUPALLI, IN THE GREEN PADDY-FIELDS AND COCONUT GROVES, IN THE WHITE SAND OF THE RIVER BANK, IN THE FLOWING WATERS AND THE CLOUD-FLECKED SKY; IN ALL MEN, FROM THOSE WE CALL RESPECTABLE, TO THOSE WE CALL LOWLY, THE WANDERER BEGAN TO SEE ONE LIGHT EMBRACING ALL. THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE AMONG THEM. GOD WAS IN EVERYONE, IN EVERYTHING.



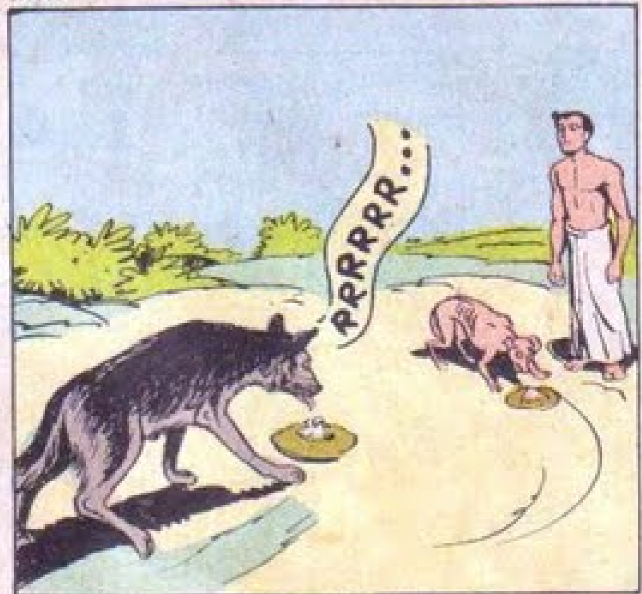
AND IN CONTRAST TO THIS RADIANT ONENESS, THIS INWARD BEAUTY THAT INHABITS EACH AND EVERY CREATION OF GOD...

...WAS THE OUTWARD NATURE OF MAN, THAT MADE HIS FELLOWMEN LIVE LIVES OF MEANNESS AND MISERY...

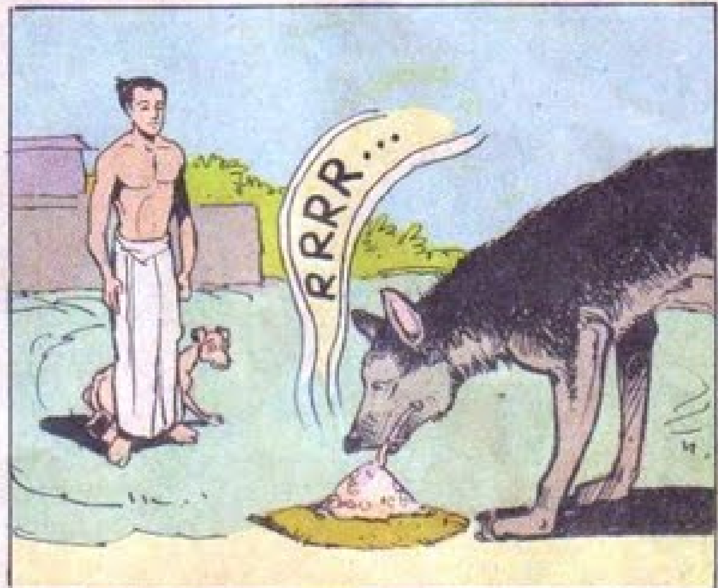


... MAN: BLIND, IGNORANT OF THE INNER LIGHT, AND THEREFORE...


---FOOLISH, VAIN, GREEDY AND SELFISH.
COME, LITTLE ONE— EAT YOUR RICE...
UNH, UNH...


RRRRRR...


ROUF, ROUF
WOOF...
WOOF...
GRRR...

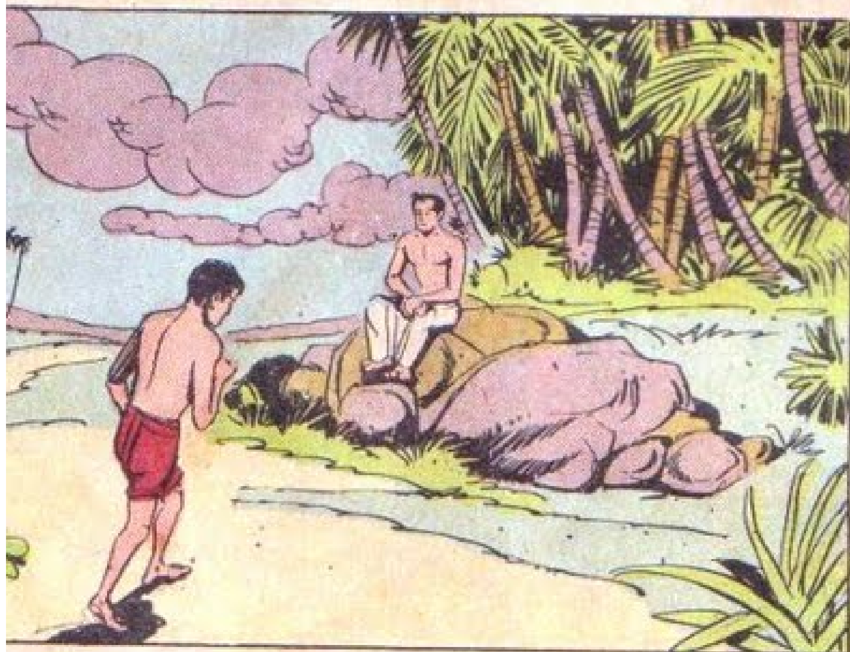

RRRR...


POOR, LITTLE ONE, POOR, LITTLE ONE.
UNH, UNH.

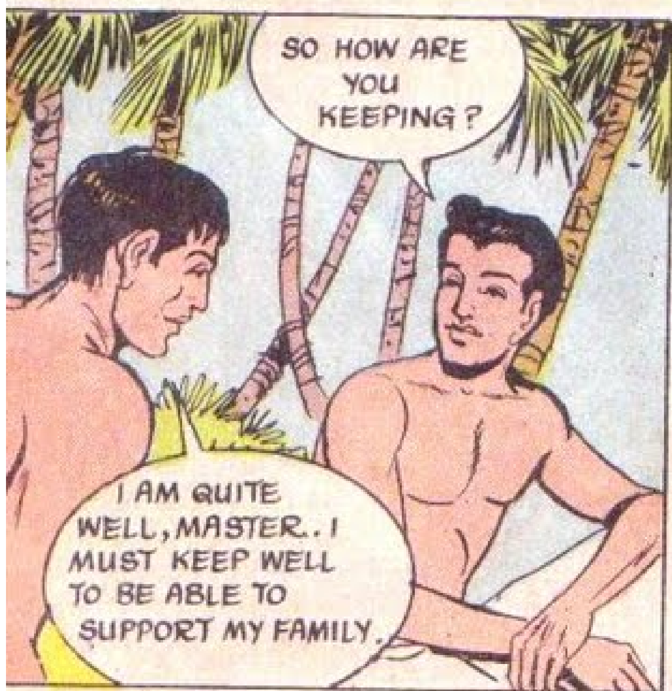

ROUF... GRRR...
WAS MAN ANY BETTER THAN THIS...





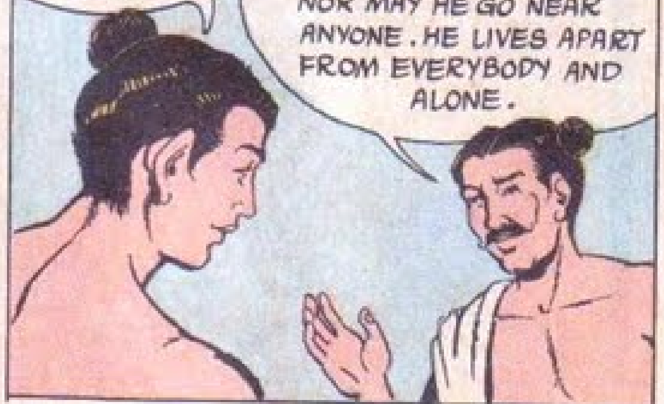




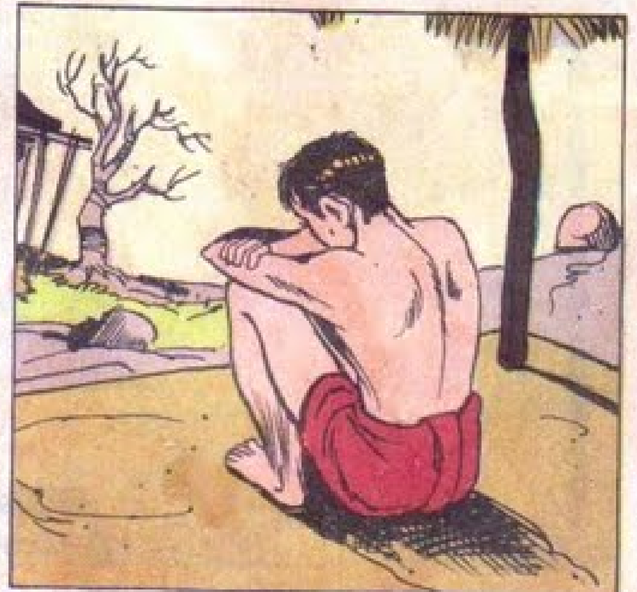

SO HOW ARE YOU KEEPING?
I AM QUITE WELL, MASTER.. I MUST KEEP WELL TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT MY FAMILY.


AND IS YOUR FAMILY TOO, IN GOOD HEALTH?


SOON AFTER, ONE DAY—
CHATTAN SEEMED SILENT AND SAD FOR MANY DAYS. NOW HE HAS ALTOGETHER STOPPED COMING FOR HIS USUAL CHAT.


NARAYAÑA WENT TO CHATTAN'S EMPLOYER.
SIR, WHERE IS CHATTAN THE COWHERD THESE DAYS?
AH, YES... HE HAS BEEN AFFLICTED WITH LEPROSY, THE POOR PULAYA. NOW, NONE MAY APPROACH HIM, NOR MAY HE GO NEAR ANYONE. HE LIVES APART FROM EVERYBODY AND ALONE.



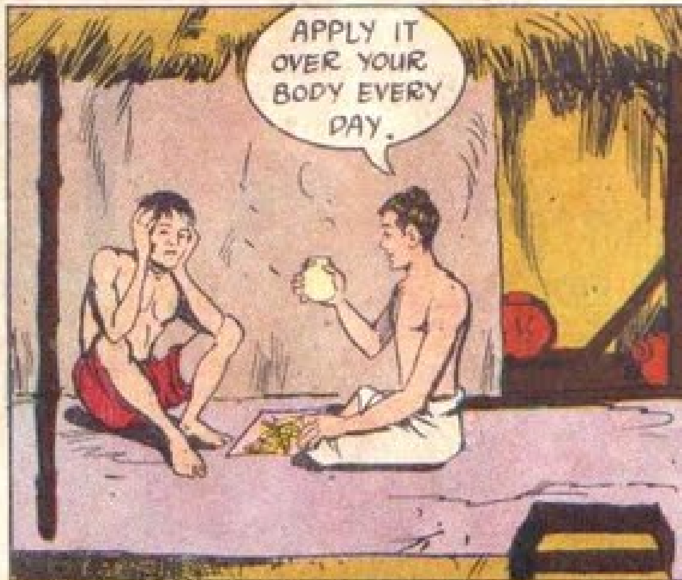


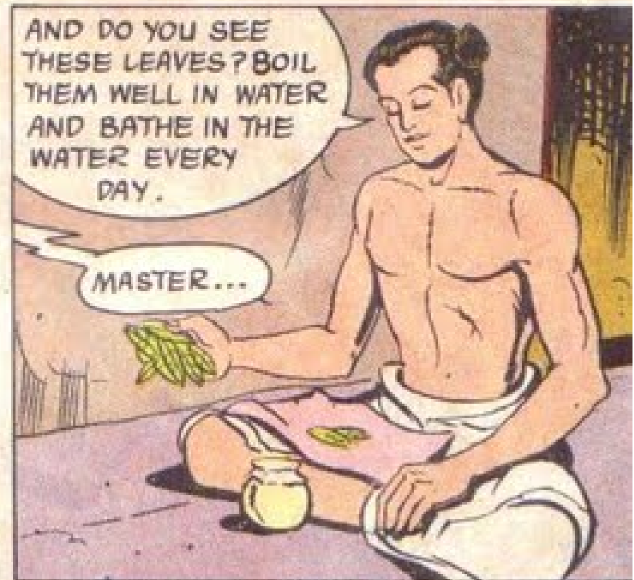

CHATTAN!
UH...?

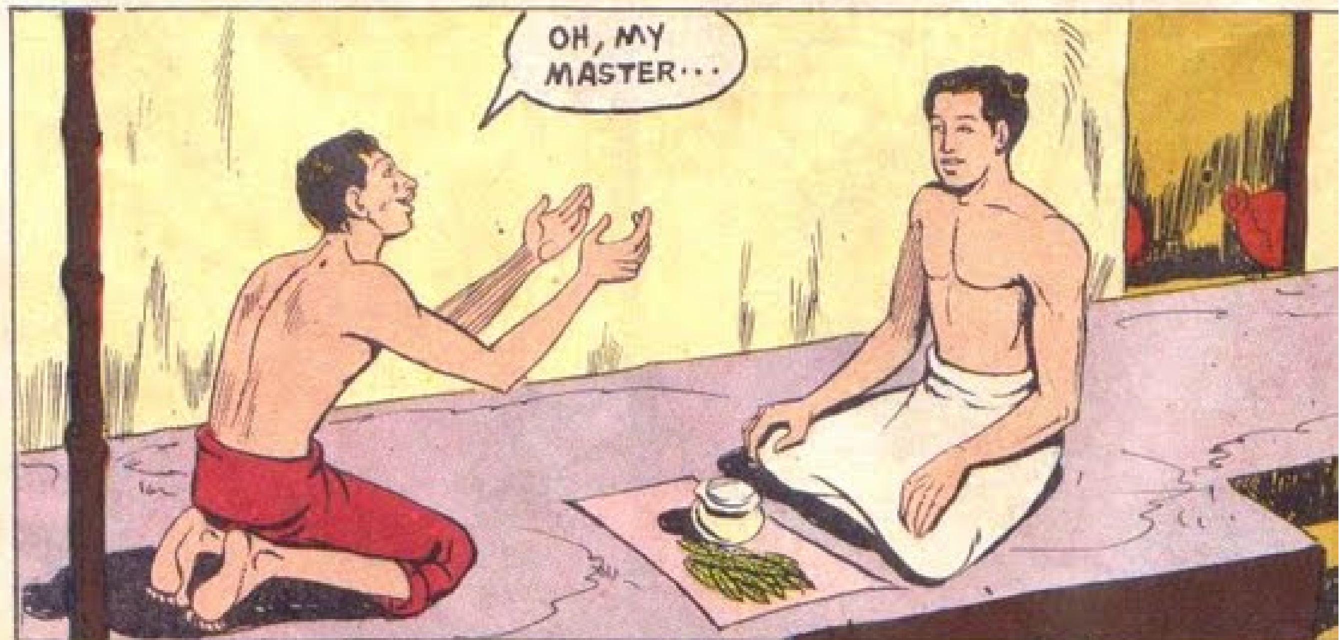

HOW ARE YOU FEELING NOW?
MASTER— YOU!


OH, GOD!
OH, GOD!
OH, GOD!
DON'T BE AFRAID, CHATTAN, AND WHY DO YOU WEEP?

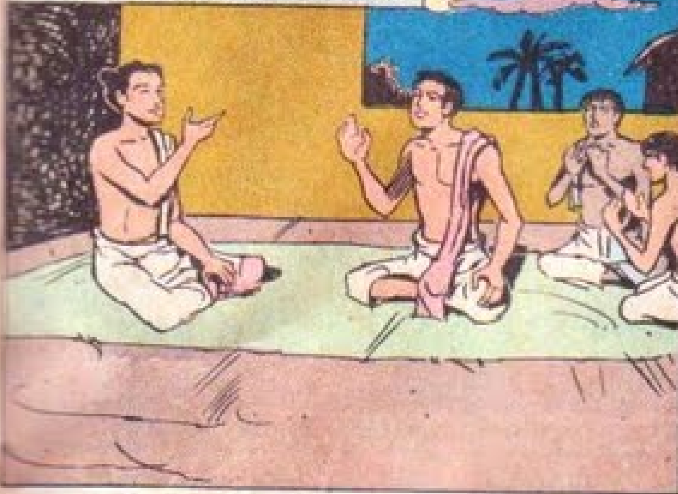

I HAVE BROUGHT THIS CLOTH FOR YOU, AND THIS BOTTLE WHICH CONTAINS A SPECIAL OIL.


APPLY IT OVER YOUR BODY EVERY DAY.

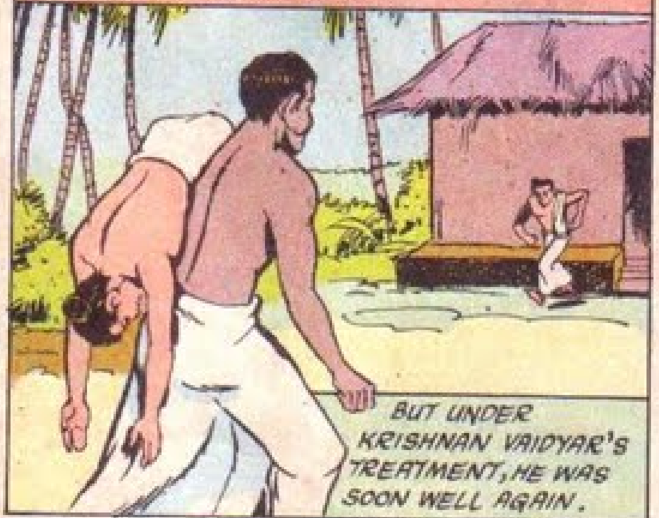

AND DO YOU SEE THESE LEAVES? BOIL THEM WELL IN WATER AND BATHE IN THE WATER EVERY DAY.
MASTER...


OH, MY MASTER...

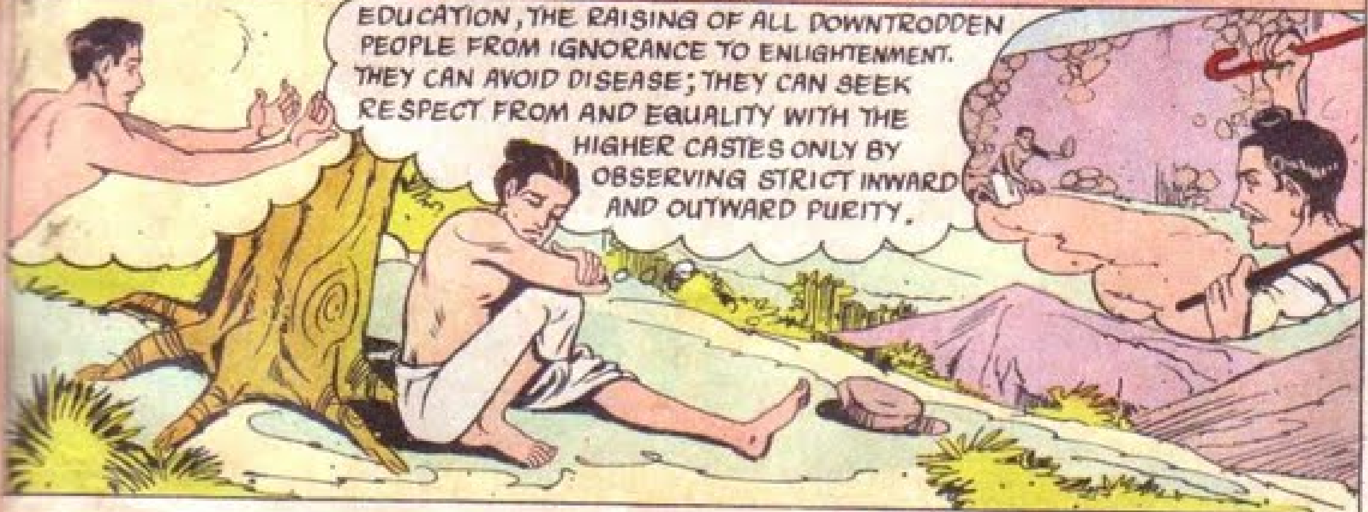
THE PAIN OF DISEASE, THE INJUSTICE OF SOCIAL LIFE BEGAN TO HAUNT NARAYANA. HE PONDERED DEEPLY ON LIFE. AT NIGHT, WITH A FEW OF HIS CLASS-MATES, HE CHANTED THE NAME OF GOD.



THEN ONE DAY, HIS MENTAL ANGUISH CAUSED HIM TO FALL SERIOUSLY ILL AND HE HAD TO BE BROUGHT HOME TO CHEMPAZHANTI.



HE DID NOT GO BACK TO PUTUPALLI. HE HAD WANDERED AND SEARCHED TO HIS FILL IN THE LAND OF BOOKS. NOW THE NEXT STAGE HAD COME—WANDERING IN THE REGIONS OF HIS MIND, SEARCHING WITHIN HIS SOUL, SURROUNDED BY SOLITUDE. SLOWLY, THE ANSWER BEGAN TO FORM.



BUT MEANWHILE, NARAYANA'S FAMILY HAD ARRANGED HIS MARRIAGE. HIS OWN COUSIN'S DAUGHTER HAD BEEN CHOSEN AS THE BRIDE. NARAYANA WAS NOT EVEN PRESENT ON THE OCCASION.

KALIAMMA, ACCEPT THESE CLOTHES, AND NOW, LET ME TAKE MY BROTHER'S BRIDE HOME.

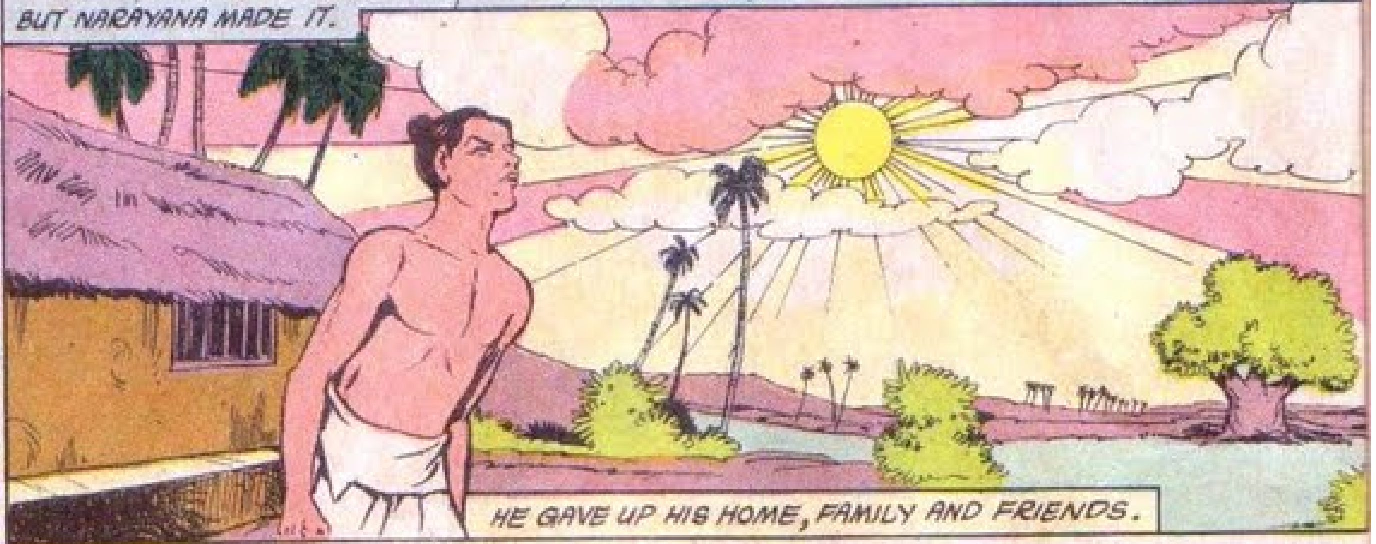


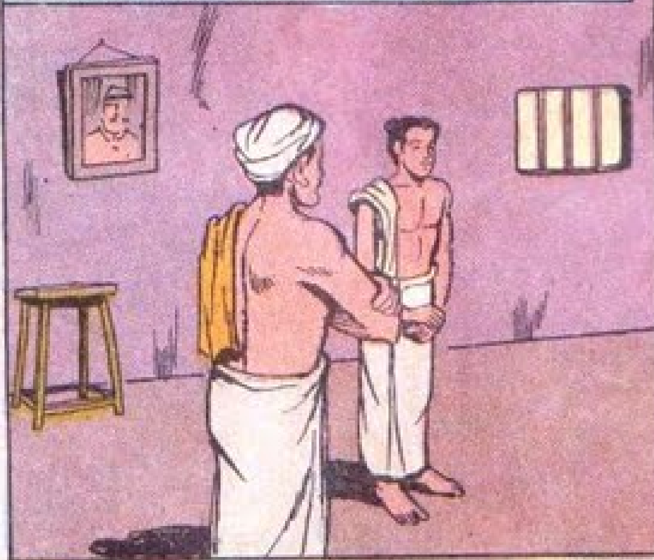
WITH THIS SMALL CEREMONY THE RITUAL OF MARRIAGE WAS OVER.

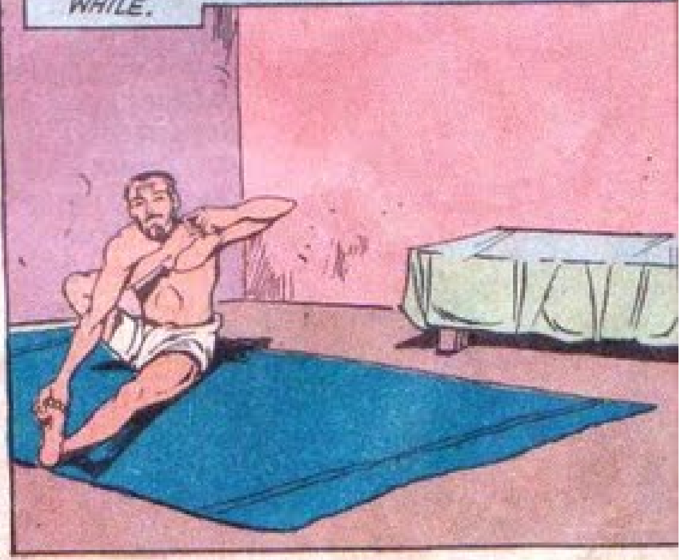
BUT NARAYANA HAD TAKEN UP A GREAT SPIRITUAL TASK. HE COULD NOT NOW AFFORD THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE MATERIAL WORLD. AT HIS BRIDE'S HOUSE—

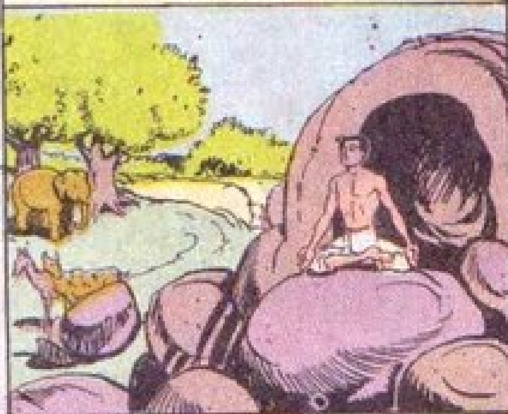
AUNTY, UNCLE — EVERYONE IS BORN FOR A DEFINITE PURPOSE. YOU HAVE YOURS; I HAVE MINE. YOU MUST FOLLOW YOURS; I MUST FOLLOW MINE.




TO FORSAKE THE SECURE, FAMILIAR WORLD OF LIFE IS NOT EASY. IT WAS A SUPREME EFFORT, BUT NARAYANA MADE IT.
HE GAVE UP HIS HOME, FAMILY AND FRIENDS.


HIS PATH CROSSED THOSE OF TWO GREAT MEN, KUNHAN PILLAI CHATTAMPI ...


... AND CHATTAMPI SWAMI'S GURU, THYCAUD AYYAVU, WHOSE DISCIPLE HE BECAME FOR A WHILE.


THEN AGAIN CAME THE DESIRE FOR SOLITUDE AND REFLECTION. HE WENT TO THE LONELY FORESTS OF MARUTWAMALAI NEAR NAGERCOIL (NOW IN TAMIL NADU) AND BEGAN TO MEDITATE.


HIS FOOD WAS OFTEN THE JUICE OF A HERB THAT WHEN LEFT FOR SOME MINUTES...
...SOLIDIFIES INTO A CAKE.



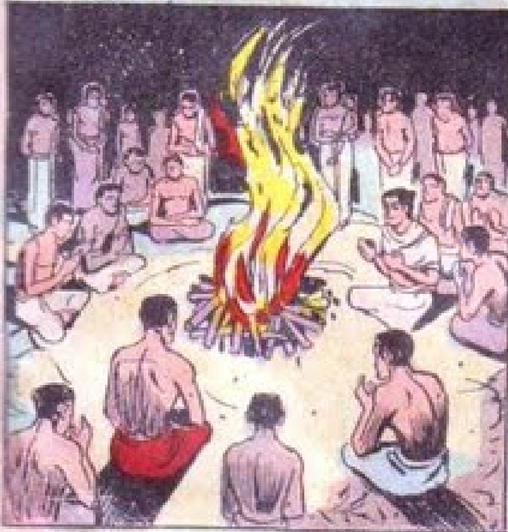
THOUGH HE MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE, NOT ONCE DID HE FEEL FEAR.

OOOOW... OOOOW...

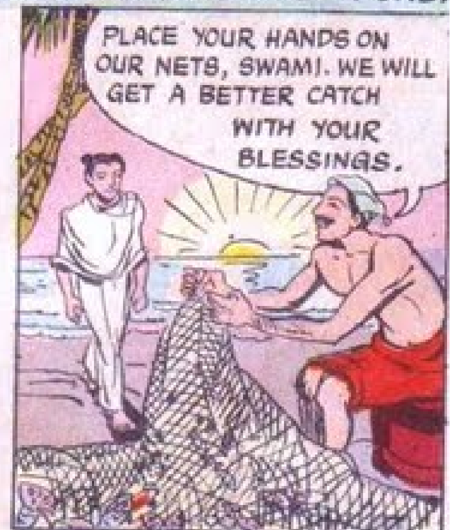
FEAR ARISES WHEN WE THINK THAT THERE ARE THINGS IN THIS WORLD, OTHER THAN OURSELVES. WHEN WE KNOW WE ARE EVERY-THING CONTAINED IN OURSELVES, WHERE IS THE CAUSE FOR FEAR? — NARAYANA GURU.

NEVER BEFORE HAD THE INDIVISIBILITY OF LIFE SO IMPRESSED ITSELF UPON HIM.

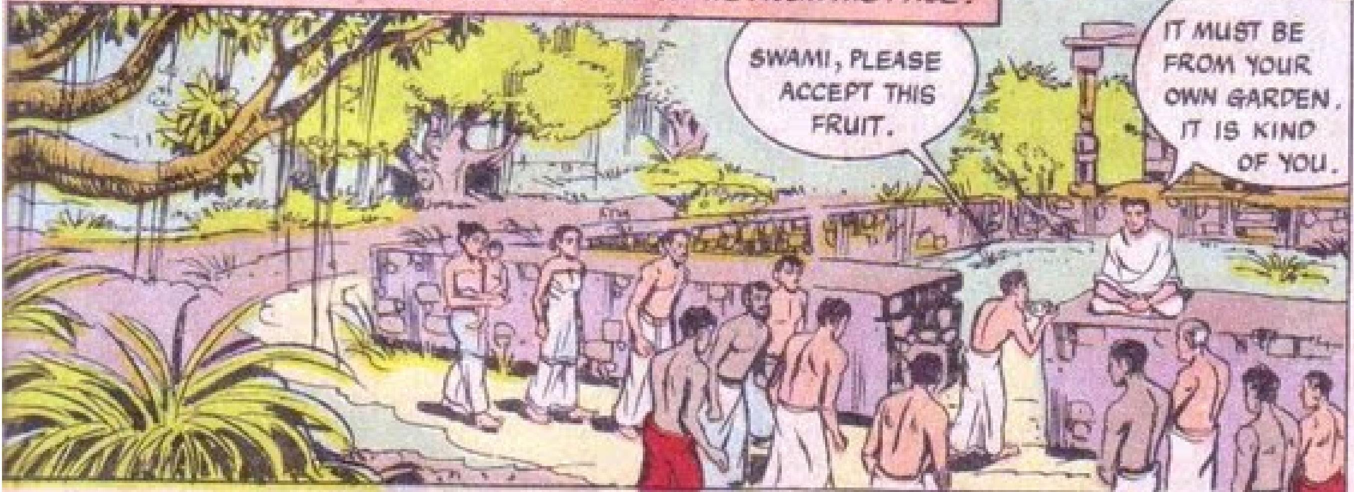
THEN, REFRESHED AND RECHARGED WITH SPIRITUALITY, SWAMI RETURNED TO THE WORLD OF MEN. HAVING ATTAINED FULL CERTAINTY ON ALL MATTERS OF SUPREME HUMAN INTEREST, HE WITH HIS MIND AT PEACE AND HEART AT REST, MOVED AMONG THE PEOPLE, SHARING THEIR LIVES, INSPIRING THEIR REVERENCE AND LOVE.

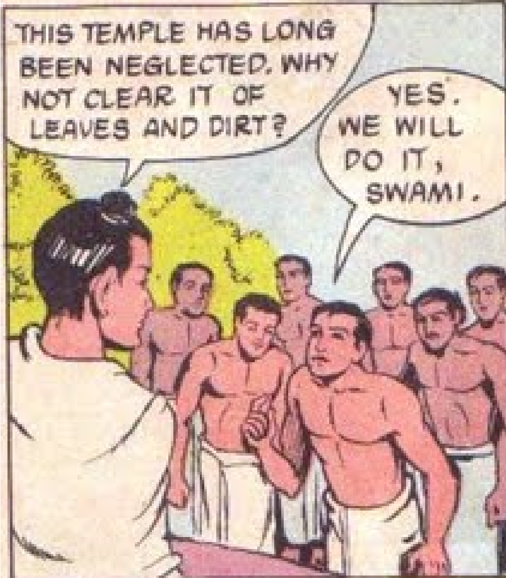




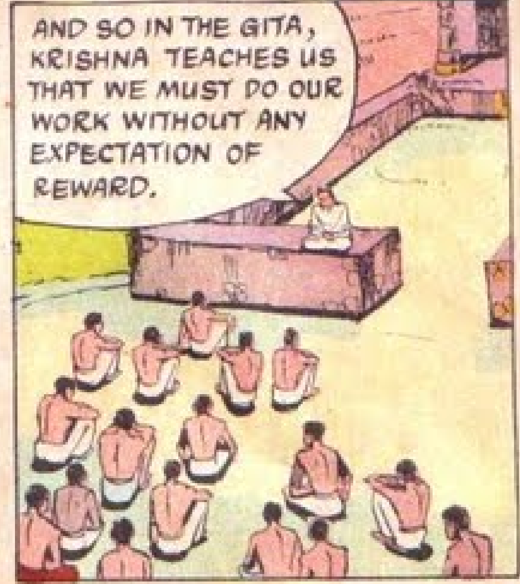


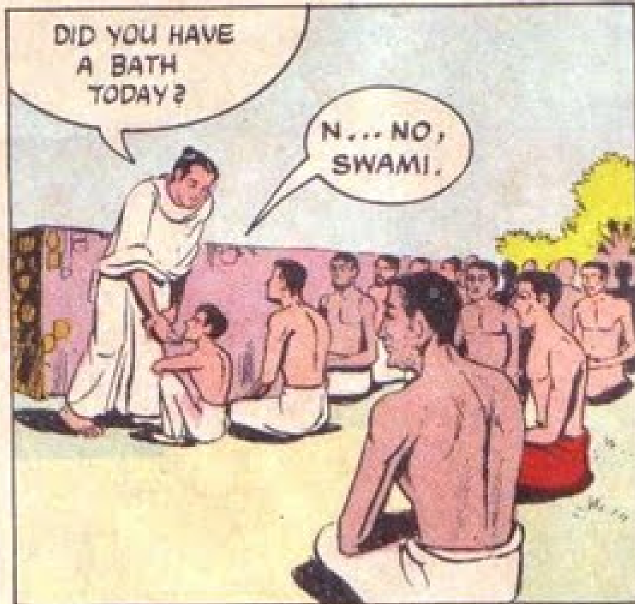
THE WANDERER NOW WANDERED ABOUT WITH A MISSION TO FULFIL. HE MOVED FROM TEMPLE TO TEMPLE LIVING FOR A FEW DAYS IN ONE, SPENDING A MONTH IN ANOTHER. WHEREVER HE WENT, VISITORS WERE STRUCK BY THE COMPASSION AND WISDOM THAT SHONE FROM HIS FACE.

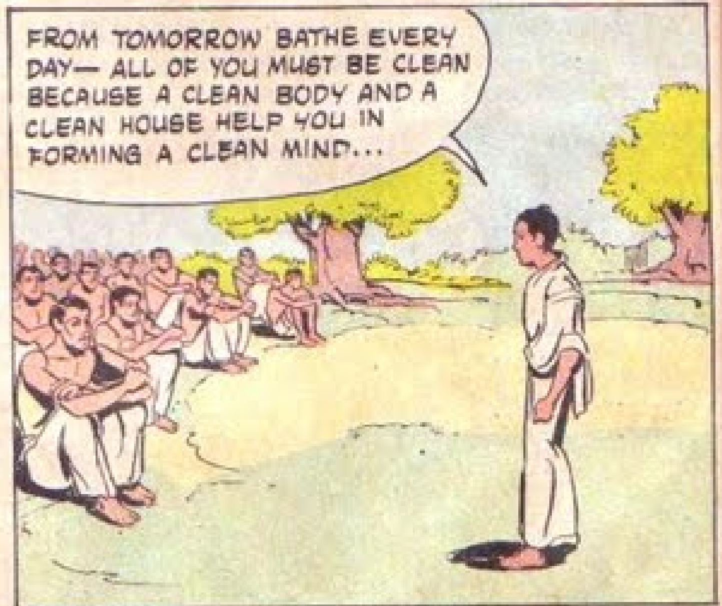


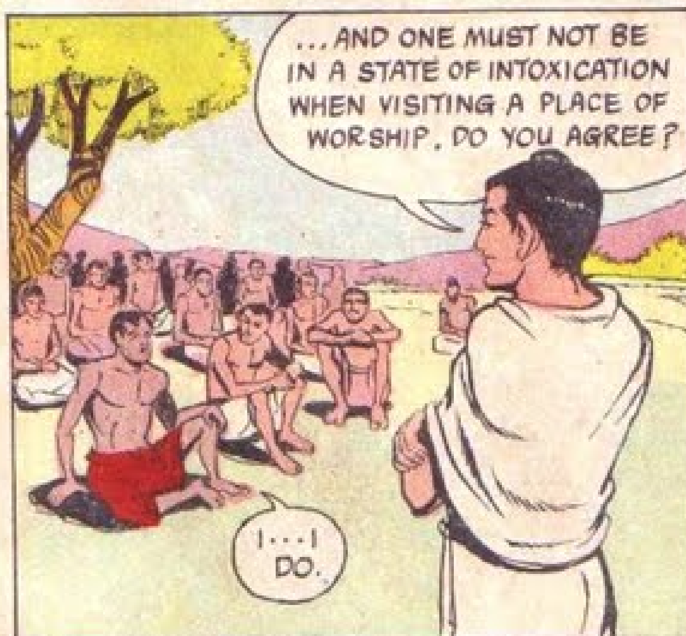

THIS TEMPLE HAS LONG BEEN NEGLECTED. WHY NOT CLEAR IT OF LEAVES AND DIRT?
YES. WE WILL DO IT, SWAMI.

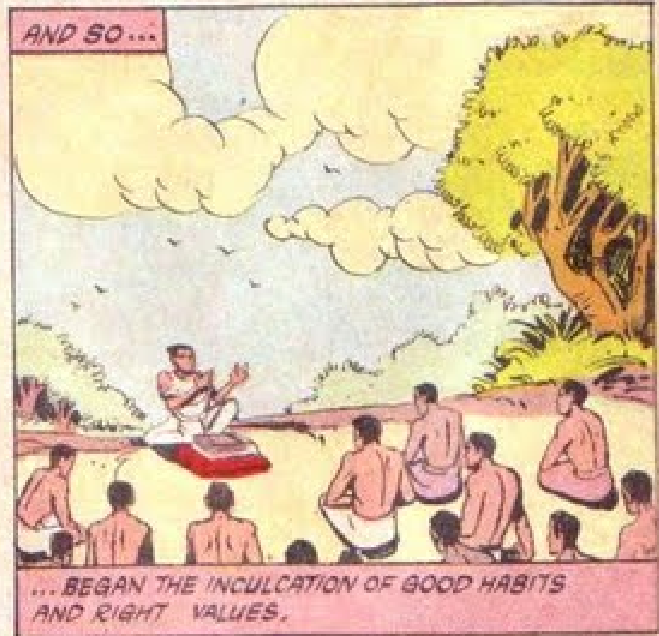



AND SO IN THE GITA, KRISHNA TEACHES US THAT WE MUST DO OUR WORK WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATION OF REWARD.

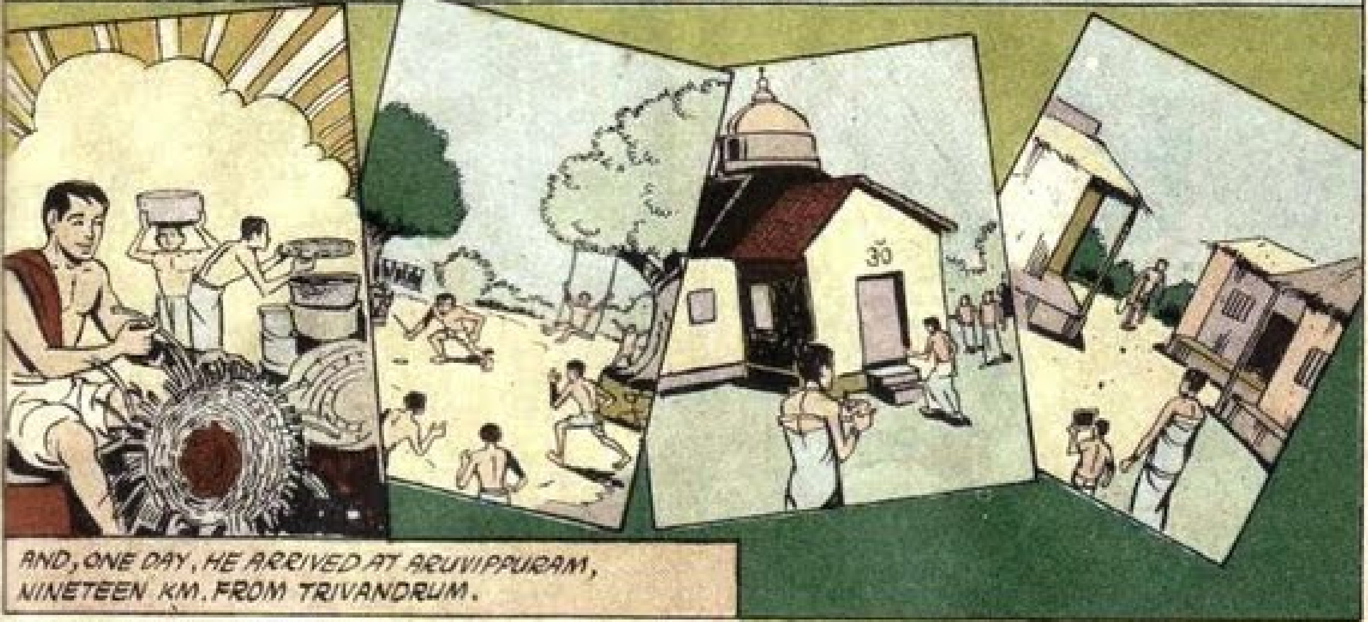

DID YOU HAVE A BATH TODAY?
N... NO, SWAMI.


FROM TOMORROW BATHE EVERY DAY— ALL OF YOU MUST BE CLEAN BECAUSE A CLEAN BODY AND A CLEAN HOUSE HELP YOU IN FORMING A CLEAN MIND...


...AND ONE MUST NOT BE IN A STATE OF INTOXICATION WHEN VISITING A PLACE OF WORSHIP. DO YOU AGREE?
I...I DO.


AND SO...
...BEGAN THE INCULCATION OF GOOD HABITS AND RIGHT VALUES.

WHICHEVER PLACE NARAYANA VISITED IN HIS WANDERINGS HE LEFT IT CLEANER THAN HE FOUND IT. IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE HE MET, HE SOWED THE SEEDS OF NOBLER THOUGHTS AND BETTER LIVES.



HERE TOO, ATTRACTED BY HIS MAGNETISM, SEVERAL PEOPLE CAME TO SEE HIM. SOON ENOUGH, SOME OF THE DEVOTEES BEGAN TO BRING THEIR PROBLEMS TO HIM.

SWAMI, I FEEL UNWELL, I CANNOT SLEEP AT NIGHT.

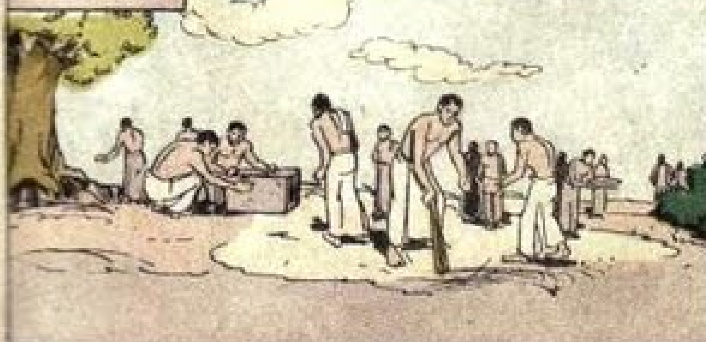
HERE ARE SOME HERBS. EVERY NIGHT, TAKE A DRAUGHT MADE FROM THEM. YOU WILL GET RELIEF.

SWAMI'S SIMPLE AYURVEDIC MEDICATIONS EFFECTED MANY CURES. HIS FAME SPREAD FAR AND FAST.

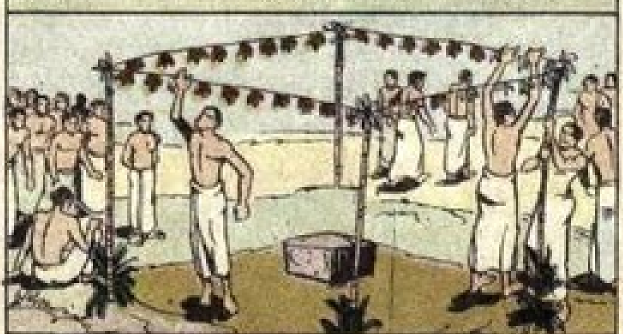
AS A RESULT OF HIS INFLUENCE, AN ATMOSPHERE OF HARMONY AND PEACE PERVADED ARUVIPPURAM.

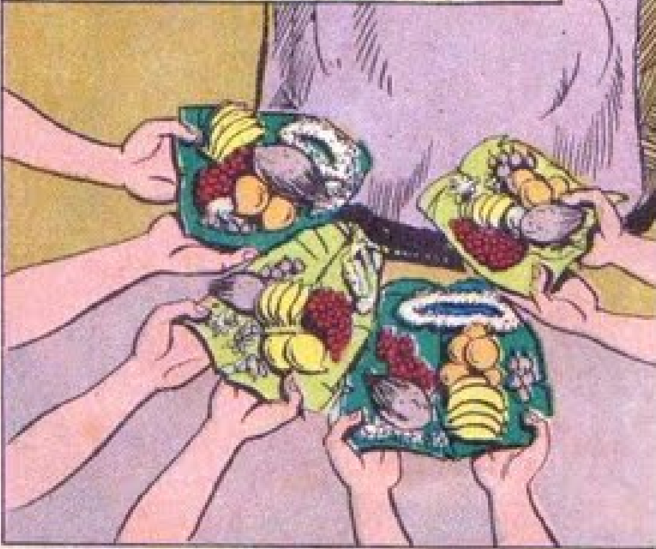


AND A TEMPLE SPRANG UP SPONTANEOUSLY ON THAT SPOT; A TEMPLE QUITE UNLIKE THE TYPICAL TEMPLE OF THE DAY. THERE WERE NO TALL ENCLOSING WALLS TO EXCLUDE A CERTAIN SECTION OF SOCIETY...

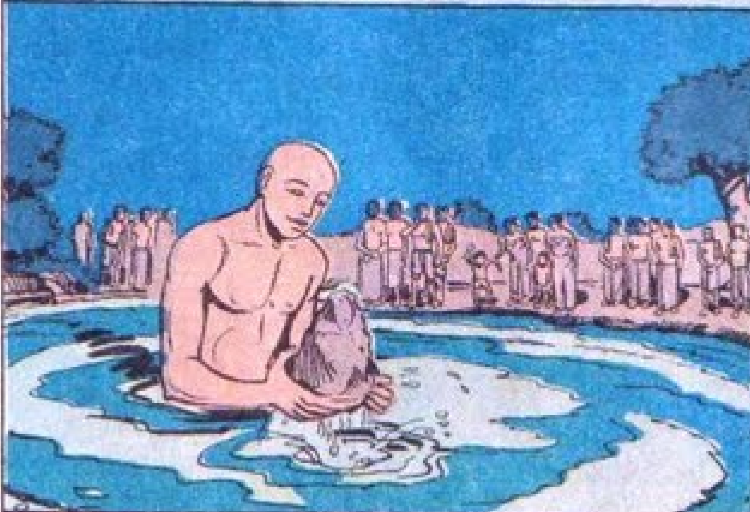


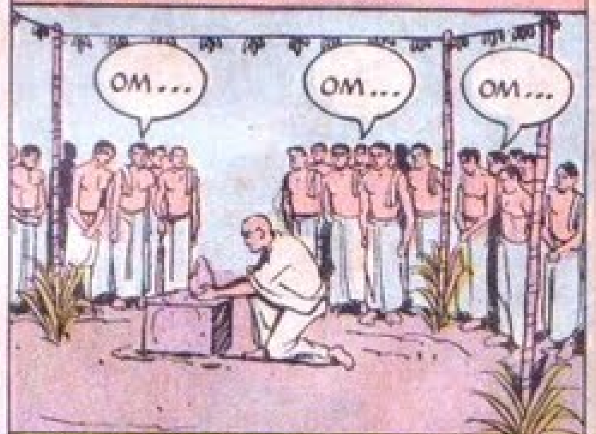
...NO DISTANT, INACCESSIBLE ALTAR AT THE END OF A MYSTERIOUS AND DARK CORRIDOR...




... NO RICH OFFERINGS THAT, ENCOURAGE CORRUPTION IN THE HOUSES OF GOD.

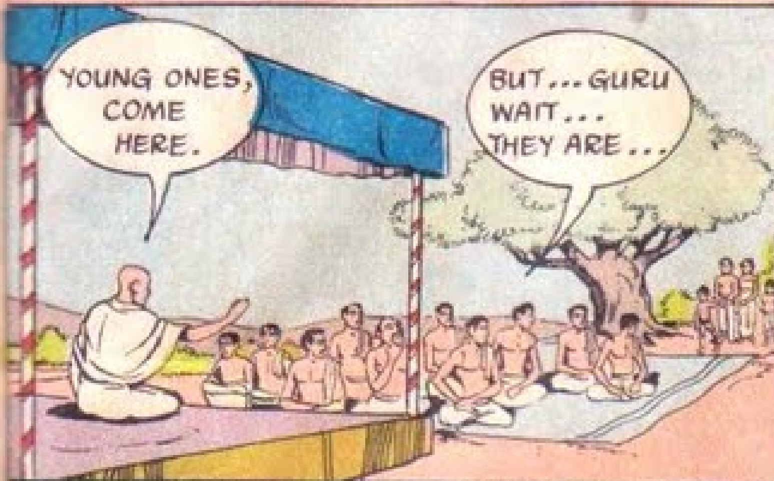

IT WAS A FAR-FROM-ORDINARY TEMPLE.
THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE TEMPLE INSTITUTION HAD BEGUN.


THEN IT WAS SIVARATRI. CROWDS OF PEOPLE THRONGED THE TEMPLE SITE. AS THE HOLY HOUR OF MIDNIGHT APPROACHED, A HUSH DESCENDED ON THE PEOPLE ...
... AS THE GURU WADING INTO THE RIVER, PICKED UP A STONE FROM THE RIVER BED.

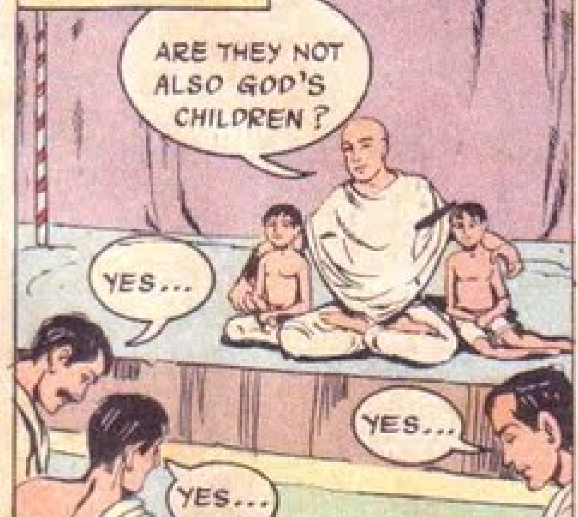

AND, TO THE CHANTING OF MANTRAS, HE INSTALLED IT ON THE ALTAR.
OM...
OM...
OM...
THE SIMPLE STONE PICKED UP FROM THE RIVER BED, SYMBOLISED THE OMNIPRESENT NATURE OF GOD, WHICH THE SWAMI HAD REALISED DURING THE COURSE OF HIS MEDITATIONS.


PEOPLE ACCLAIMED SWAMI AS THE GURU. HE HIMSELF SIGNED ALL HIS LETTERS AND MESSAGES AS "NARAYANA GURU". BORN AN AVARNA, HE HAD INSTALLED THE SIVA LINGA AT ARUVIPPURAM AND THUS DONE SOMETHING NEVER DONE BEFORE. LATER, WHEN HE CAME TO LEARN THAT THE LOCAL BRAHMANAS WERE DISPLEASED WITH HIS BREAKING OF TRADITION, HE SAID—
YOU CAN TELL THEM THAT WE HAVE INSTALLED AN EZHAVA SIVA.

ONCE DURING ANOTHER SIVARATRI FESTIVAL, THE GURU NOTICED SOME PULAYA PEASANTS AND CHILDREN WATCHING THE CEREMONY FROM A DISTANCE.



THE GURU LOVINGLY MADE THE BOYS SIT BESIDE HIM.



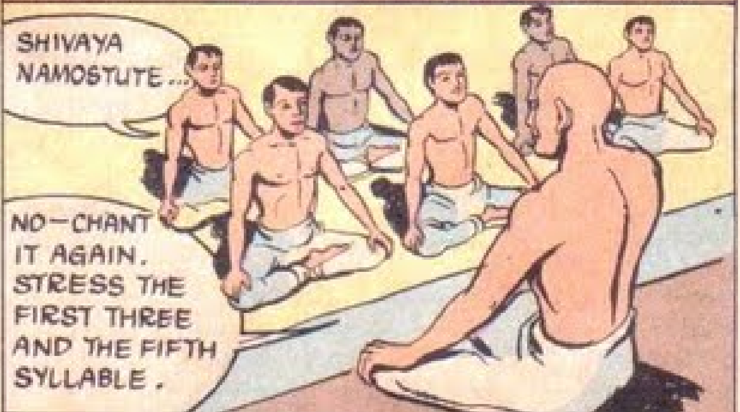
PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME, PULAYAS PUBLICLY TOOK PART IN AN EZHAVA FUNCTION. LATER TOO, THE GURU WOULD GENTLY INDICATE THAT ALL MEN BE ALLOWED INTO THE MANY TEMPLES HE HAD INSTALLED, FOR HOW COULD WE, HE ASKED, DEMAND EQUALITY WITH THE HIGHER CASTES UNLESS WE FIRST CONSIDERED THE LOWER CASTES OUR EQUALS.

AND THE GURU ESTABLISHED HIS FIRST ASHRAM AT THE ARUVIPPURAM TEMPLE, ITS MOTTO INSCRIBED ON ITS WALL:

WITHOUT DIVIDING WALLS
OF CASTE OR RACE,
OR HATRED OF RIVAL FAITHS,
WE ALL LIVE HERE IN
BROTHERHOOD,
SUCH, KNOW THIS PLACE
TO BE—
THIS MODEL FOUNDATION.

THE ASHRAM WAS REGISTERED AS A SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND NAMED THE ARUVIPPURAM TEMPLE ASSOCIATION.

EZHAVA AND PULAYA BOYS JOINED THE ASHRAM. THE GURU PERSONALLY TRAINED HIS YOUNG DISCIPLES.



THESE BOYS WOULD ONE DAY BECOME PRIESTS OF THE GURU'S TEMPLES AND CHANT THE SACRED SHLOKAS AS PERFECTLY AS THE BRAHMANA PRIESTS DID.

IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT SWAMI VIVEKANANDA MET ONE DAY A DISTINGUISHED POLITICAL LEADER, IN MYSORE.

SWAMIJI, MY NAME IS DR. PALPU. YOU HAVE SEEN HOW OUR PEOPLE SUFFER SUCH INJUSTICE. IT MUST ALL BE CHANGED. WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE?

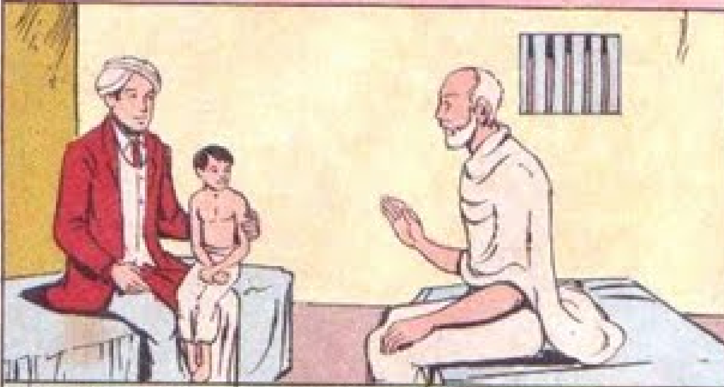
TAKE UP RELIGION TO CURE RELIGION. LET A RELIGIOUS FIGURE GUIDE YOU IN YOUR VENTURE.

A RELIGIOUS FIGURE—DR. PALPU KNEW AT ONCE WHO THAT SHOULD BE.

HE CAME DIRECTLY TO THE GURU, AND RELATED HIS DREAM. IT WAS THIS DREAM THAT SAW THE REESTABLISHMENT, WITH THE GURU'S BLESSING, OF THE ARUVIPPURAM TEMPLE ASSOCIATION AS THE "SRI NARAYANA DHARMA PARIPALANA YOGAM" IN 1903.

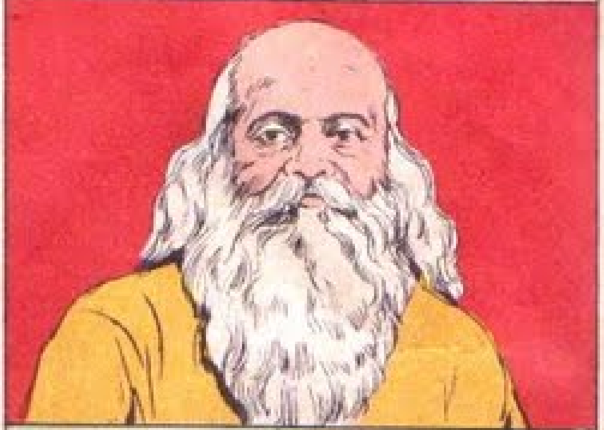
THIS ORGANISATION, POPULARLY KNOWN AS SNDP YOGAM, SOON GATHERED MOMENTUM IN THE MOVEMENT AGAINST MEANINGLESS CUSTOMS AND CEREMONIES.*

ONCE DR. PALPU BROUGHT WITH HIM HIS SECOND SON, AGED FOUR, WHOM THE GURU HAD NAMED 'NATARAJAN' WHEN HE WAS BORN. YOUNG NATARAJAN GREW UP UNDER THE GURU'S TUTELAGE.



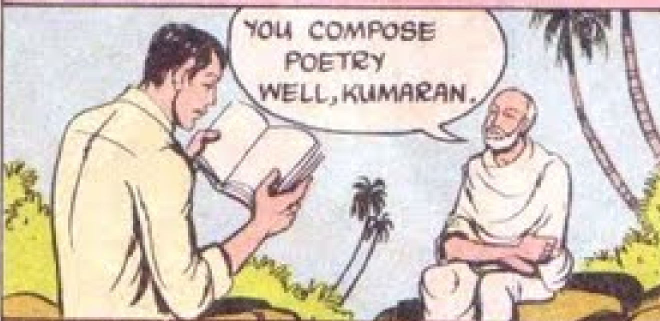
NARAYANA GURU SENT NATARAJAN TO SORBONNE UNIVERSITY IN PARIS FOR HIGHER STUDIES. HE WAS TO BECOME THE GURU'S MOST DISTINGUISHED DISCIPLE.

NATARAJA GURU (1895–1973), A GURU IN HIS OWN RIGHT, FOUNDED THE GURUKULAM CENTRE CONCEIVED BY HIS GURU.



TODAY, THERE ARE MANY SUCH MODEL CENTRES IN INDIA AND ABROAD.

NARAYANA GURU ALSO MET AT THIS TIME, A YOUNG POET NAMED KUMARAN ASAN.



IN LATER YEARS, KUMARAN, WITH INSPIRATION FROM THE GURU WROTE SOME OF THE GREATEST POETRY PRODUCED IN MALAYALAM AND CAME TO BE RECOGNISED AS A NATIONAL POET.

THE GURU'S TRAVELS CONTINUED. IN 1904, A MATH* WAS ESTABLISHED AT SIVAGIRI, VARKALA. THE ADVAITA ASHRAM AT ALWAYE FOLLOWED TEN YEARS LATER — ALL SIMPLE, AUSTERE CENTRES.



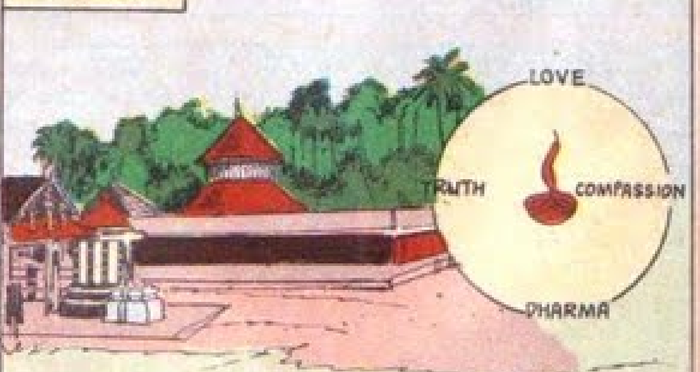
AT SIVAGIRI IS LOCATED THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE SREE NARAYANA DHARMA SANGHAM TRUST, AN ORGANISATION OF SANYASINS.**

AT SIVAGIRI TOO IS AN IDOL OF THE BEAUTIFUL SARADA, THE GODDESS OF LEARNING, SYMBOLISING THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL AWAKENING OF MEN THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.



TO ADDRESS MAN'S PRAYER TO ONE GOD, NARAYANA GURU TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES THE 'DAIVA DASAKAM' A PRAYER WHICH IS ADDRESSED TO 'GOD' AND NOT TO ANY PARTICULAR DEITY.

MORE TEMPLES CAME UP LIKE THE JAGANNATHA TEMPLE AT TELLICHERRY AND THE SRIKANTHESWAR TEMPLE AT CALICUT.



AT MURUKKUMPUZHA, NEAR TRIVANDRUM, WAS CONSECRATED A SIMPLE, BRIGHT LAMP REVEALING IN MALAYALAM, THE WORDS, "TRUTH, DHARMA, COMPASSION, LOVE".



ONCE, FOR A NEW TEMPLE AT KALAVANKODAM, SHERTALLAY DISTRICT, THE GURU'S DEVOTEES GOT INTO A HEATED ARGUMENT. ONE GROUP WANTED AN IDOL INSTALLED. THE OTHER OPPOSED IT. FINALLY—



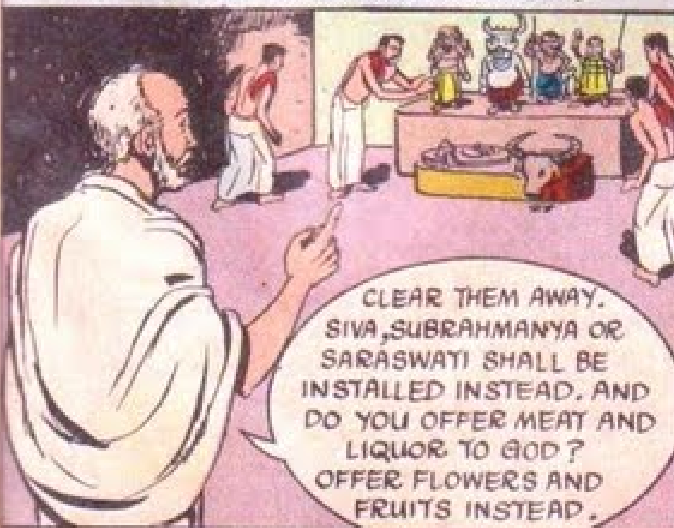
THOUGH PERPLEXED BY THEIR SMILING SWAMI'S STRANGE REQUEST, THE DEVOTEES BROUGHT THE MIRROR.

AND NEITHER AGREEING NOR DISAGREEING WITH EITHER GROUP, SWAMI INSTALLED THE MIRROR IN THE TEMPLE...

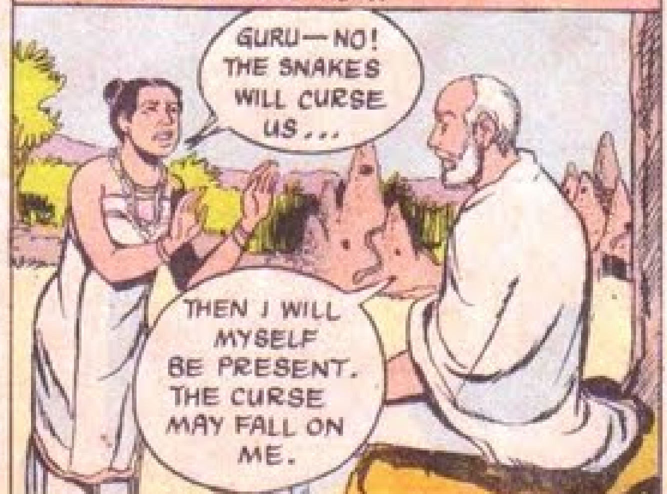


...REMINDING US THAT THE GOD-HEAD WATCHFULLY RESIDES IN OURSELVES, VERY MUCH LIKE A CHANGE-LESS MIRROR, WHILE THE IMAGES IN THE MIRROR ARE EVER-CHANGING LIKE THE OUTSIDE WORLD OF OUR SENSES.

THE GURU'S SIMPLIFICATION OF CEREMONIES BROUGHT GREAT RELIEF TO IMPOVERISHED FAMILIES. THE GURU PERSONALLY PERFORMED MANY CHANGES. AT KOTTAR, HE HAD THIRTY-ONE PRIMITIVE IDOLS REMOVED.



TO CHANGE THE DEEPLY EMBEDDED RELIGIOUS BELIEFS WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. SCORNING THE SUPERSTITIONS THAT SNAKES CAUSE LEPROSY AND SKIN DISEASE, HE URGED EZHAVA FAMILIES WHO HAD SARPAKAVUS* TO CLEAR THEM.



IT WAS NOT ENOUGH TO PREACH. PRACTICAL OPTIONS HAD TO BE SUGGESTED.

... BUT GURU, TODDY-TAPPING IS OUR OCCUPATION. WHAT OTHER JOB CAN WE DO?

SPIN! MAKE KHADI FOR THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT. LIQUOR IS POISON. DON'T PRODUCE IT, DON'T VEND IT, DON'T CONSUME IT.

IN 1924, AN ALL-RELIGIONS' CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT ALWAYE ADVAITA ASHRAM. LEADERS AND SCHOLARS REPRESENTING CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM, BUDDHISM, AND BOTH THE ARYA AND BRAHMO SAMAJAS TOOK PART IN IT.

OUR AIM AT THIS CONFERENCE IS NOT TO ARGUE ABOUT THE RELATIVE MERITS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS. BUT TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER.

THE GURU HAD LONG NURSED THIS IDEA OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND NOW IT TOOK CONCRETE SHAPE. THE BASIC LINK OF ONENESS THAT RUNS THROUGH ALL RELIGIONS EMERGED CLEARLY AT THIS HISTORIC CONFERENCE.

THE GURU GREATLY ADMIRED THE BUDDHA, AS ALSO JESUS CHRIST AND MOHAMMAD, ALL OF WHOM GAVE THE WORLD HIGH MORAL AND SOCIAL VALUES. HE MET AND TALKED WITH CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES, DISCUSSED THE QURAN WITH MULLAHS AND TWICE VISITED SRI LANKA, MEETING MANY BUDDHIST MONKS THERE. HE HAD GONE DEEP INTO HINDUISM, THE RELIGION HE WAS BORN INTO AND EVERY OTHER WORLD RELIGION AND SAW THE SAME TRUTH IN ALL OF THEM*. THIS MADE THE IDEA OF CONVERSION SENSELESS TO HIM. ON ONE OCCASION—

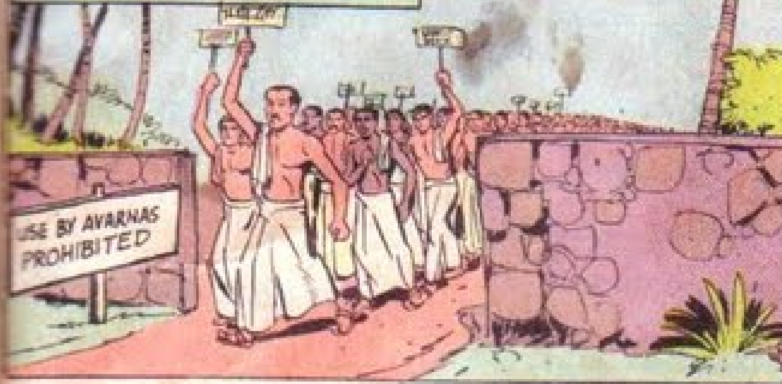
GURU, HINDUISM HAS BEEN THE CAUSE OF GREAT SUFFERING FOR US. OFTEN I FEEL THAT ALL EZHAVAS SHOULD BECOME CONVERTS TO BUDDHISM.

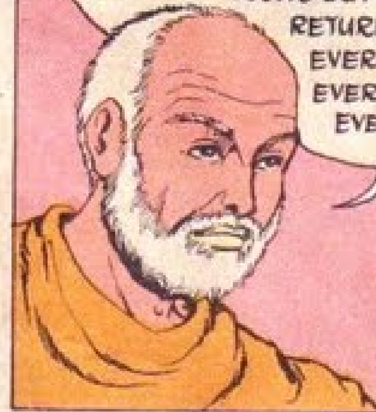
WHY NOT CONVERT HINDUISM INSTEAD?

ALL RELIGIONS ARE THE HERITAGE OF THE WORLD, EACH EQUALLY RIGHT. WHATEVER BE THE RELIGION OF AN INDIVIDUAL, WHAT MATTERS IS THAT HE IS GOOD.

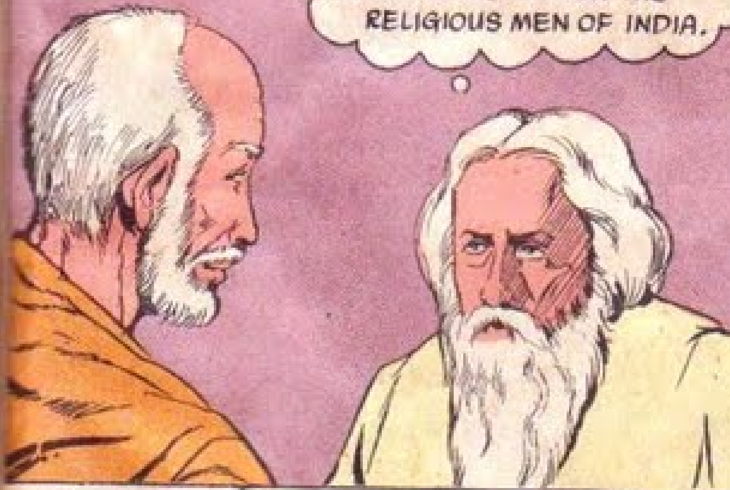
* NARAYANA GURU ADVOCATES "MANAVA DHARMA" - ONE RELIGION FOR MAN. DHARMA IS THAT WHICH SUPPORTS TRUTH OR REALITY

IN 1924 WAS CONDUCTED THE GREAT VAIKAM SATYAGRAHA, BACKED BY GANDHIJI. THIS SATYAGRAHA DEMANDED ENTRY FOR AVARNAS INTO ROADS LEADING TO TEMPLES. T.K. MADHAVAN, A DEVOTED ADMIRER OF THE GURU WAS THE BACKBONE OF THE MOVEMENT. THE GURU'S ENCOURAGEMENT GAVE ADDED IMPETUS TO THE SATYAGRAHA.





WHEN RABINDRANATH TAGORE MET THE GURU AT SIVAGIRI—



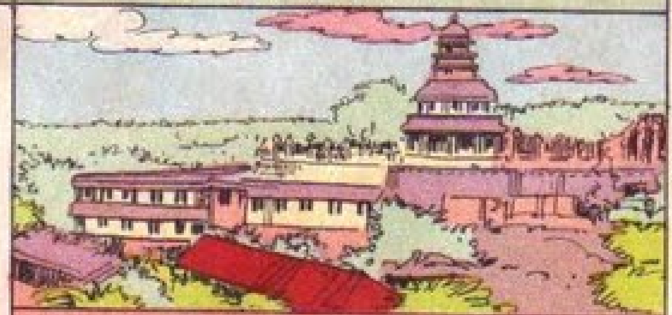
GANDHIJI TOO HAD A MEETING WITH THE GURU.



THE GIST OF NARAYANA GURU'S LEGACY TO MAN IS CONTAINED IN A STANZA OF ONE OF THE MANY BEAUTIFUL POEMS THAT HE WROTE.

OF ONE KIND, OF ONE FAITH,
OF ONE GOD IS MAN,
OF ONE WOMB, OF ONE FORM,
HERE, DIFFERENCE THERE
IS NONE.

AND IN THIS ODE TO COMPASSION (ANUKAMPA DASAKAM) HE GIVES A MANTRA COMMON FOR ALL: "ONLY HE LIVES WHO LOVES".



NARAYANA ATTAINED MAHASAMADHI* ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1928. HIS SAMADHI AT SIVAGIRI IS A CENTRE OF PILGRIMAGE FOR ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HUMAN FREEDOM AND EQUALITY.

* ABSORPTION IN THE ABSOLUTE.